Dungeons & Dragons® Supplement

Heroes of Horror™

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Contents

Introduction 4
What's In This Book 4

Chapter 1: Dread Encounters 5
Stand-Alone Encounters 6
Introducing Horror 6
Setting the Stage 6
Creating Horror 7
Creepy Effects 8
The Villain of a Horror Encounter 10
Villainous Traits 12
Sample Encounter: "To Grandmother's House" 13
Sample Encounter: "Annalee's Baby" 15
New Demigod: Cas 19

Chapter 2: Dread Adventures 21
Horror Adventures in Nonhorror Campaigns 21
Designing a Horror Adventure 22
Mood 22
Setting 24
Plot and Story 25
Villains in a Horror Game 27
Techniques of Terror 33
Splitting the Party 33
Don't Show Everything 33
Threaten Friends, Allies, and Loved Ones 33
The Evil Duplicate Ploy 34
Finding the Achilles' Heel 34
Introducing New Elements to the Campaign 35
Sample Adventure: For Hate's Sake 35

Chapter 3: A Horror Campaign 39
The Basics of Horror Gaming 39
Setting 40
Plot in a Horror Campaign 44
Villains 46
Unhappy Endings 47
Sample Campaign: Nightwatch 48
Other Campaign Models 51
Dreams and Nightmares 52
Constructing Dreams 52
Dreams as Plot Devices 53
Adventuring in Nightmare Realms 54
Dream Magic 58
Monsters of the Dreamscape 58

Chapter 4: Rules of Horror 59
Dread 59
Shock 60
Weariness 60
Illness and Despair 60
Obsession 60
Fear 61
Alternative Degrees of Fear 61
Escalating Fear 61
Phobias 61
The Taint of Evil 62
Effects of Taint 63
Physical Symptoms 63
Mental Symptoms 65
Taint and Alignment 67
Cleansing Taint 67
Horror Environments 68
Tainted Locations 68
Dread Effects 68
Haunting Presences 69
Mortuary Terrain 72
Campaign Rules 76
Alignment 76
Divination 78
Death and Resurrection 78
Violence and Taint 80

Chapter 5: Heroes and Antiheroes 81

Classes 82
Archivist 82
Dread Necromancer 84

Prestige Classes 88
Corrupt Avenger 88
Death Delver 93
Dread Witch 98
Fiend-Blooded 102
Purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine 108
Tainted Scholar 113

New Feats 119
Tainted Feats 119
Vile Feats 119
Feat Descriptions 119
Archivist of Nature 119
Bane Magic 119
Blood Calls to Blood 120
Corrupt Arcana 120
Corrupt Spell Focus 120
Debilitating Spell 120
Debilitating Strike 120
Deformity (Skin) 121
Deformity (Tall) 121
Deformity (Teeth) 121
Deformity (Tongue) 121
Disease Immunity 121
Draconic Archivist 122
Dreamtelling 122
Eldritch Corruption 122
Font of Life 122
Forbidden Lore 123
Greater Corrupt Spell Focus 123
Haunting Melody 123
Improved Oneiromancy 123
Lunatic Insight 123
Mad Faith 123
Master of Knowledge 123
Oneiromancy 123
Pure Soul 124
Spirit Sense 124
Surge of Malevolence 124
Tainted Fury 124
Touch of Taint 124
Unnatural Will 124
Willing Deformity 125

Dread Magic 125
Evil Spells and Taint 125
Corrupt Spells 125
Spell Lists 125
Spell Descriptions 127
Bestow Wound 127
Call Forth the Beast 127
Chain of Sorrow 128
Cloak of Hate 128
Detect Taint 128
Dream Sight 128
Dream Walk 129
Dreaming Puppet 129
Familial Geas 129
Fire in the Blood 129
Harm, Greater 130
Harm, Mass 130
Imprison Soul 130
Manifest Desire 130
Manifest Nightmare 130
Mantle of Pure Spite 130
Master's Lament 131
Oath of Blood 131
Pact of Return 131
Plague of Undead 131
Pronouncement of Fate 132
Resist Taint 132
Restful Slumber 132
Rigor Mortis 132
Summon Undead I 132
Summon Undead II 132
Summon Undead III 132
Summon Undead IV 133
Summon Undead V 133
Vile Death 133

Magic Items and Artifacts 133
Rod of Sanctity 133
Artifacts 133

Chapter 6: Creatures of the Night 135

Villains in Horror 135
Beyond Gothic 135
The Vampire 135
The Wolf-Man 136
Frankenstein's Monster 136
The Mummy 136
Ghosts 136
Aberrations 137
Animals and Vermin 137
Dragons 137
Fey 138
Giants 138
Humanoids 138
Monstrous Humanoids 139
Outsiders 139

New Monsters 139
Bane Wraith 139
Bloodrot 140
Bog Imp 142
Boneleaf 143
Corruption Eater 144
Elemental, Taint 145
Giant, Dusk 147
Golem, Cadaver 149
Gray Jester 151
Bleak Ones 151
Phantasmal Slayer 152
Tainted Minion 153
Tainted Raver 154
Unholy Scion 155

Introduction

Heroes of Horror is a rules supplement for the Dungeons & Dragons® Roleplaying Game. It's a player resource that gives players the tools they need to build characters with dark secrets in their past, paralyzing phobias, or an irresistible urge to explore the forbidden side of magic. DMs can use this book as a toolbox to build a horror encounter, adventure, or campaign for the D&D game.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

Heroes of Horror contains information for DMs and players alike. The first three chapters focus on advice for the Dungeon Master on incorporating horror elements into a campaign. The last three provide a variety of new mechanics to help bring those horrific visions to life.

Dread Encounters (Chapter 1): Every horror campaign starts with a single encounter. This chapter describes how to make a D&D encounter horrific rather than simply challenging. It also discusses suitable villains for such an encounter and provides two sample horror encounters, "To Grandmother's House" and "Annalee's Baby." Finally, this chapter presents a new demigod whose influence can provoke horror encounters: Cas, the demigod of spite.

Dread Adventures (Chapter 2): Sometimes an entire adventure will revolve around a horror theme. This chapter describes moods, settings, and plots that make for horrific adventures, as well as discussing ways of creating villains who can dominate an entire horror adventure. Finally, after several techniques to make an adventure more frightening for the PCs, it provides a sample short horror adventure, "For Hate's Sake."

A Horror Campaign (Chapter 3): An entire campaign devoted to horror requires special trust between the DM and players, since the PCs may not in fact end up saving the day. This chapter describes ways to establish that trust, as well as describing settings, plots, and villains that work well in horror campaigns. Finally, after outlining a sample campaign, "Nightwatch," it provides rules for adventuring in dreamscapes and nightmare realms.

Rules of Horror (Chapter 4): This chapter describes new ways to use the rules of D&D to evoke a sense of dread. It also presents a new rule set, the taint mechanic, to represent ways in which exposure to evil eventually causes both physical and moral decay, known respectively as corruption and depravity. Other new rules describe tainted locations, haunting presences (poltergeists), and mortuary terrain, as well as alternative alignment rules more suited for horror gaming. Finally, it discusses ways that divination magic and resurrection magic can be warped by the pervading horror of the setting.

Heroes and Antiheroes (Chapter 5): This chapter presents two new standard classes, the archivist and the dread necromancer, as well as half a dozen new prestige classes, from the fiend-blooded, who embraces the evil inherent in his ancestry, to the purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine, who strives to stop the spread of taint. This chapter also details more than thirty new feats, some of them powered by taint and others useful in fighting tainted creatures, and a like number of new spells, including corrupt spells that inflict ability damage upon their caster and oneiromancy spells, which allow the caster to manipulate the dreams of others. Finally, a brief section on artifacts and magic items describes one useful item, the *rod of sanctity*, which might prove a lifesaver to PCs due to its ability to cleanse taint, and three malign artifacts, including the sinister *Acererak's robe*, which enables its wearer to convert the living into the undead with simply a touch.

Creatures of the Night (Chapter 6): This chapter is divided into two parts. The first describes ways in which to use traditional fantasy and horror monsters, such as a vampires, giants, and dragons, in new and unsettling ways. The second part details thirteen new monsters and templates suitable for horror adventures, from the taint elemental and the dusk giant to the tainted minion and the unholy scion.

Adventure Sites: *Heroes of Horror* contains eleven maps depicting various environments in which a horror encounter or horror adventure could occur. Most of these maps, such as the lich's shrine (page 49), have supporting text that describes locations within the site. Two of the maps, the vampire lord's castle (page 32) and Shadow House (page 70), are stand-alone maps that a DM can use for any appropriate purpose.

TAINT

One of the principal new mechanics is a revision of the taint system originally presented in *Oriental Adventures* and updated in *Unearthed Arcana*. At its heart, the taint system is based on the idea that exposure to horrific evil—even if that exposure is limited to fierce combat in an unceasing crusade against the forces of darkness—has a corrupting influence on even the purest of hearts. This idea is a staple of fantastic horror literature and film. Some heroes of horror will continue to struggle against that corruption until they take their dying breath, but others will eventually embrace the darkness, becoming sinister figures who resemble the monsters they hunt perhaps a little too closely. This book is intended for both kinds of characters, as suggested in the title of Chapter 5: Heroes and Antiheroes.

A number of prestige classes, feats, and other elements rely on the taint system. Even so, if you choose not to incorporate the rules for taint into your game, there's still plenty in this book for you. Both of the new standard classes work fine without the taint rules, and many of the feats, prestige classes, spells, and other mechanical elements do not rely on taint. Our aim has been to give you the tools you need to run or play in a D&D game that incorporates horror elements—how you use those tools, as always, is up to you.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Heroes of Horror makes use of the information in the three D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. In addition, it revises and updates material originally presented in *Oriental Adventures*, *Unearthed Arcana*, and *Book of Vile Darkness*. Though possession of any or all of these supplements is not necessary, they can enhance your enjoyment of this book.

Illus. by E. Polak

Tordek gripped his waraxe tightly, his jaw set and his hollow eye sockets gleaming with green light, as the vampire spawn circled to surround them. Nebin clenched his dagger, pressing its point into his skin as he prepared to draw the blood he would need to fuel his next spell. They stood back to back, shielding Lidda's stiffening body from the approaching monsters.

The spawn had them surrounded and began to close in hungrily. They took only a few steps, however, before they stopped in their tracks, shuffling uneasily, some glancing back over their shoulders. Tordek snarled, "Come on, you beasts! I'm ready for you!" but Nebin's bony hand clutched his arm tightly. He wheeled to face him, then turned his eyeless gaze to follow hers.

Silence spread through the gathered vampire spawn, and the horde seemed to part like water as their master strode forward. His heavy armor clanked against the cold stone floor.

"My old friends!" purred the vampire lord's voice. At the sound, Tordek let his axe clatter to the ground. "The years have not been good to you, I'm afraid. But as you can see, I am in my very prime." The vampire stood close to the gnome and the dwarf, towering head and shoulders above them. He smiled, revealing needle-sharp fangs in a threatening welcome.

Tordek was struck speechless, but Nrbin managed a gasp, his lips forming a name he had not spoken in years.

"Jozan?"

Why should you want to play a horror game?

Well, why not? Chances are, if you're playing D&D you're already exploring a world full of dark sorcerers, evil cultists, monstrous undead, and bizarre monstrosities. The line between horror and fantasy is not always easy to draw. Some of the authors whose work laid the foundations of the D&D game—such as Fritz Leiber, Robert E. Howard, and Clark Ashton Smith—wrote tales that could as easily be called horror as fantasy, and many of the spells, characters, and monsters that appear in the core D&D rules are quite horrific.

A horror adventure or campaign is not, in the end, all that different from a standard D&D game. Just like more standard fantasy fare, a horror game is full of terrible monsters, evil necromancers and malevolent sorcerers, nightmarish landscapes, and cunning fiends. What sets a horror game apart is its atmosphere, which presents all the horrific elements of a fantasy game in their worst possible light, emphasizing the dread they inspire.

Why emphasize this dark side of D&D's heroic fantasy? Primarily because it's fun. The continuing success of fiction, movies, and TV shows that make use of horror elements is testament to the fact that we like to be scared—at least, many of us do. If you're reading this book, it's a good bet that you fall into that category.

Horror lavishes attention on the dark side of fantasy—painting horrible monsters in bold strokes but also including plenty of subtle shades of gray, particularly in the complex motivations of the heroes. The intent is not to glorify evil but to cast good in sharper relief, even if good is represented as a tiny candle flickering weakly in a darkness that threatens to overwhelm it. At its heart, a horror campaign is about real heroism—the kind of heroism that only appears when the forces of evil seem poised to triumph.

STAND-ALONE ENCOUNTERS

The single encounter, as opposed to a full adventure or longer campaign, is in many ways the perfect format for dread-based roleplaying—the Platonic ideal of horror in gaming, if you will. The most common and readily accessible manifestation of horror is the horror of the immediate and the unexpected. While it's certainly possible to cultivate and maintain dread over a long, drawn-out period (see Chapter 3), the nature of the beast is such that only certain types of horror stories work well with that approach.

In the single encounter, every dirty trick of the horror repertoire is fair game. Just like in short horror fiction, you should feel free to take off the kid gloves. For some, this is the source of appeal in running horror roleplaying games: the opportunity to throw players a curveball, pulling them from the ordinary world (or its fantasy equivalent) and scaring the hell out of them in the process.

Unraveling the normal world is a common theme in horror, and especially so in an episodic format. Consider the many anthologies of horror short stories available, or television shows such as *Night Gallery, Tales from the Darkside,* and of course *The Twilight Zone.* Many of these short-form horror stories begin with the establishment of a norm, introducing the reader or viewer to the world the protagonist ordinarily inhabits. Only once the familiar context is established does the dreadful force or idea intrude and begin to break it down. By identifying with the protagonist's ordinary world, the viewer or reader shares the growing dread of a protagonist forced to contend with the intrusion or, in some cases, the outright devastation of his formerly comfortable world.

A horror encounter is the D&D equivalent of this same idea. The rest of the campaign before this intrusion of horror is the context by which the players understand the world of their characters. It is the background against which the horrific makes a startling, unexpected contrast. The effectiveness of a horror encounter dropped into a standard campaign comes down to how artfully the DM weaves the horror into the overall context.

INTRODUCING HORROR

Why introduce a horror-based encounter into a game that has had not only a much different focus but a completely different tenor until this point?

DMs might be inspired to work a horrific sequence into a fantasy adventure game for a number of different reasons, the most basic of which is the notion that all adventure stories possess some element of horror. Consider what is generally accepted as the primary source of influence for the game: the work of J. R. R. Tolkien. *The Lord of the Rings* contains a number of truly terrifying sequences, perhaps the most familiar of which are the ones featuring the ringwraiths, some of the most frightful creatures ever to appear in fantasy fiction.

The important thing to remember about the horror is the purpose that it serves in larger stories. In the ongoing saga of the One Ring, the ringwraiths are a grim (and all too effective) reminder of what befalls men whose greed overtakes them. Tolkien was careful to make sure that every scene in which the ringwraiths make an appearance serves the greater purpose of reinforcing not only the danger of Frodo's mission but the crucial idea that Frodo is truly the only one who can do it.

Tolkien makes the ringwraiths as haunting and disturbing as he does, in both their appearance and their tragic origins, in order to make the reader appreciate the immensity of the burden that has been placed on such a small pair of shoulders. If getting to Mount Doom were a walk in the park, the fantasy story wouldn't pack nearly the punch it does. The horrific element adds emotional weight to the rest of the story. As the reader watches a poor hobbit trying to outwit or outrun a seemingly unbeatable foe, his own heart races in sympathetic appreciation. And when he sees the poor hobbit succeed in outwitting the terrifying foes, he recognizes that fear itself has been beaten.

This, then, is another good reason for introducing a horror encounter into an ongoing campaign. If the players are growing complacent or, worse yet, emotionally detached, then an unexpected horror sequence is a good way to shake up the game, like flinging a cup of cold water in the players' faces. A well-paced, moody, nail-biting encounter can go a long way toward energizing player characters, or even revitalizing a group of players whose interest has waned.

SETTING THE STAGE

A good scary encounter starts with the players, rather than the game. Horror is about provoking instinctive, visceral reactions, so players need to be in a frame of mind conducive to such reactions. Some gaming groups have a tendency to get a little giddy, particularly at the beginning of a session or toward the end of a session, when bloodstreams are racing with the effects of sugar, caffeine, and snack foods. It's fair to say that even the most capable DM is going to have a hard time evoking horror when his players won't stop giggling at each other, or quoting Monty Python, or making out-of-character puns.

For this reason, the use of metagame techniques is important for a horror encounter. Even if the DM is hesitant to reveal the nature of the departure he has planned for the group, the benefit of tipping his hand in this fashion often outweighs the drawbacks. Most players will cooperate with a DM they trust, even if they don't know precisely what he has up his sleeve. And that cooperation is more than good for horror, it's essential.

The degree to which a DM will go to set the mood is a variable thing, dependent upon the nature of your game, yourself, and your players. For some, a little mood music, such as the soundtrack of your favorite horror movie, might be all that's necessary. For others, the entire spectrum of sense come into play. Some DMs light incense and dim the

lighting, in addition to setting the stage with mood-appropriate music. However it's accomplished, make sure that none of the players become too uncomfortable as a result. The idea is to draw them in, not to compete with your own devices for their attention.

CREATING HORROR

Every DM expects to describe people, places, and things over the course of a D&D session, but that narrative is much more important in a horror-based encounter. Description and detail play a vital part in generating horror in any roleplaying game. But how much description is too much? Which details are appropriate, and which ones excessive or (worse yet) ineffective? Running a successful horror encounter can require the use of techniques and methods specific to the genre.

A truly horrific situation or scenario provokes a visceral reaction in the reader or viewer (or, in this case, the player). Fear is one of the strongest human emotions; to inspire even a little of the real thing in a session is the hallmark of excellent roleplaying.

The effectiveness of a given horror scenario can come down to one simple concept: the pace of revelation. True terror does not result from plodding revelations of one scene or event after another. While the individual elements of those scenes might be horrific, a by-the-numbers approach numbs the characters, leaving the players bored rather than horrified.

One of the key characteristics of terror is that it builds over time. Let the characters, and thus their players, slowly discover what they're in for. Perhaps their first hint of trouble is an unexplained bloodstain on the floor of their room, a darkened doorway into the side of a mountain where none stood yesterday, a corpse they discover with features identical to one of the characters—anything to draw their attention and set them on edge but leave them with little hard information. As the encounter progresses, the PCs discover that they or their loved ones are in danger; that they are racing the clock on a curse that will condemn their souls to the Abyss; that the city is being stalked by a creature no person and no magic has been able to see. Strange events occur around the PCs, from odd sounds to milk curdling to sudden attacks by domestic animals. Perhaps the characters experience horrific nightmares, in which they assault, torture, and murder their loved ones (or each other). Perhaps the encounter begins with the demise of a friend or relative of one of the PCs, in a way that mirrors the dreams of one of the other characters.

Each scene, as it progresses, leads to greater danger, greater mystery, greater fear. Of course, it might seem that most adventures follow this formula, and they do, to an extent—but in a standard encounter, this slow build-up to a finale is malleable. It can be interrupted for a quick aside or perhaps a more lighthearted incident. While a horror game need not be unrelentingly grim—you'll likely have noted that a great deal of horror has elements of humor in it ("comic relief")—the DM must guard against losing the momentum the story has built to that point. The most effective scary stories are the ones in which terror is inexorable in its approach.

It's gruesome, and perhaps even a bit disturbing, to describe the dismembered bodies of a family scattered across the floor when the PCs investigate a house. Consider instead the benefits of a step-by-step revelation. Initially, the PCs see only an empty living room, barely lit by their torches. They hear only the squeak of hinges and the creak of floorboards. The room appears empty, but successful Spot and Search checks reveal scrapes on the floor and impressions in the dust that suggest the furniture was pushed around recently, then moved roughly back into place. A faint scent, vaguely fruity, hangs in the air, noticeable only as the PCs move away from the front door. The cupboards are fully stocked. Dishes stand stacked beside the stove, in which the fire has gone cold and a bit of beef lies seared to charcoal. As the PCs approach the stairs, the most keen-eared among them (those who make Listen checks) detect the faintest sound of dripping water.

The stairs creak as the characters climb them, making stealth difficult. Near the top of the stairs, something black scuttles out of the shadows and races across the floor! No, it's just a rat . . . a rat with something in its mouth, something that smears a wet trail across the wooden slats of the second-story floor. A strange, flickering light, like that of guttering candles, leaks out into the hall from a door only slightly ajar. The fruitlike scent is stronger here, but it's almost lost amid a much stronger miasma, something coppery and acrid and too familiar to anyone who has ever been in battle.

If the PCs carefully push the door open, they find that unlike the one downstairs it doesn't make any sound at all. Examination shows the hinges have been greased with some sort of rendered fat. Inside the room, on every horizontal surface, jack-o'-lanterns glow, lit from within by long-burning candles. In every carved eye socket sits a human eyeball. Every carved mouth displays a macabre grin formed of human teeth. And there, lying on the floor . . .

Well, you get the idea. Not every discovery or every scene needs to include a slow, methodical buildup like that, but it can only add to the impact for particularly potent images of horror.

Such a buildup can also work to maintain tension, as opposed to creating it. If the PCs entered the house described above but the DM skipped or downplayed all the details between their opening the front door and entering the bedroom, the player characters' tension level would have dropped, and the impact of the final scene would be lessened. Nobody can stay on edge all the time, so be sure to allow some measure of relief and release ("Oh, thank the gods, it was just a rat!"). Don't break the mood, but don't hammer relentlessly either. When building the tension, let it drain just a bit now and again, just enough to set the PCs up for the next increase.

Finally, consider the occasional false ending. The PCs have captured the killer, slain the monster, broken the curse. They're finally starting to feel a sense of relief after a long, tough series of encounters. Then, hit them with something hard. The killer wasn't working alone, or wasn't the mastermind behind the evil deeds. The monster isn't truly dead (if it's good enough for almost every horror movie ever made . . .). The curse might be broken, but its source remains. The PCs are never more vulnerable, emotionally as well as physically, as when they've finally allowed themselves to relax. Don't do this often, though. The PCs should be permitted to enjoy the fruits of their

labors most of the time. Every now and again, though, a lull before the final pounce is a perfectly valid technique for really hammering the terror home.

HORRIFIC IDEAS

While the use of descriptive details is an effective component of running a good horror encounter, at the end of the day what makes horror horrific is the idea. No matter how eerie the circumstances surrounding a given encounter, if the central idea isn't scary or at least deeply thought-provoking, it will not give rise to an emotionally successful horror encounter.

A horror encounter differs from most other encounters not in how it looks, but in what it has to say. If the concept that lies at the heart of an encounter seems to whisper something dark to the players and their characters, then that is a potentially worthwhile horror encounter. Finding out at the end of a taut whodunit that the one who killed the local constable was a child is not in and of itself horrific. Discovering that the child who killed the constable was one of the constable's victims, returned from beyond the grave to put a grisly end to the twisted madman's depredations is. Or at least it's an idea with a solid foundation in horror. The execution of a solid idea is perhaps more important than the idea itself, but a lackluster idea can't be saved by any amount of explication or finesse.

One of the things that players find truly frightening is when a DM uses the unexpected. Fear of the unknown is perhaps greater than any other fear, and that kind of wellspring shouldn't be ignored. Coming at things from a different angle can make them fresh, and thus unexpected. Describing what would normally be secondary characteristics of a creature, object, or location, for example, is a surprisingly effective way to make people see it in a different light; that revelation can be a disturbing one for those who took it for granted. Focusing on the dreadful aspects of a creature, rather than its Challenge Rating or attack mode, is the cornerstone of making players afraid of it. It's surprising, for example, how scary an encounter with a CR 1 flock of stirges can be, given the right treatment.

Consider the following techniques for putting horror into a new context for the players.

The Unknown: Using a monster from an unfamiliar source is an effective way of getting under the skin of players and characters alike. Sometimes the impact of a particular creature or ability is diminished if the players already know what it does, or even just what it's called. (The power of names and of naming is an entire subject of its own, although it clearly plays a role in how people react to things.) Using a monster that no player in the group can readily identify can foster a mood of uncertainty that is often the key to evoking horror.

The Unforgivable: One of the simplest but most effective ways of invoking horror is to bring it home to the protagonists. In most encounters, the PCs are the outside force; the heroes come to save someone else's day. By making the circumstances personal to the players, a DM raises the stakes and introduces an unsettling element. If, after months of dealing with strangers and their problems, the PCs suddenly find out that this time it's a loved one, or at least a character they've often interacted with and actually like, you can bet the encounter will have a more direct impact on the players—precisely the goal in horror encounters.

The Unexpected: Even the most epic sagalike campaign is fairly episodic in nature. The PCs can make contact with NPCs who pop up on a regular basis, but simply by virtue of what they do—destroying evil and taking its stuff—there usually isn't much room for recurring elements in the ongoing story. One of the most frightening things a DM can do is to introduce the notion of lasting consequences into the game. After the players have achieved their goals in a particular episode, reveal an unexpected and dark consequence of their characters' actions. For example, if they succeeded in ending the reign of a murderous tyrant, they now learn that his daily sacrificial killings were keeping a powerful outsider placated. The ravenous outsider has now opened a portal from the Plane of Shadow, admitting packs of shadow mastiffs into the countryside to devastate the populace.

The Unthinkable: Present the PCs with a dilemma that doesn't offer a simple, black-and-white solution but instead only shades of gray. Forcing a hero to choose between two evils almost always has an unsettling effect, opening the door to self-doubt and for more horrors to come.

CREEPY EFFECTS

The following are little incidents you can drop into your campaign at any point to unsettle the players and their characters. Don't linger over any of these, and don't let the PCs become so obsessed with one that it distracts them from the adventure at hand. That said, it's good to have a general idea in mind of why a particular event occurred; it can be the first hint of something sinister in the offing. If the player characters resort to asking for checks to investigate one of these incidents, don't bend or break the rules. Instead, it's better to think of these incidents (for the most part) as instantaneous events; their effects may linger, but whatever caused them remains elusive.

For example, take the hostile birds described in one example. A character with wild empathy can soothe the crows with a few good rolls, and one with a high-level familiar or access to the *speak with animals* spell can ask the birds why they were so hostile, but the animals themselves do not know and can only report being filled with sudden emnity toward the PCs (or perhaps humanoids in general). The same or similar events might occur again and again, and all the PCs can do is learn to recognize settings where they might be vulnerable to that particular effect and avoid them as best they can.

- A wolf howls in the distance.
- The torches/fire/lanterns flicker and almost die, despite the lack of any breeze.
- A PC awakens to chewing noises beside his bed or bedroll, with no sign of what might have made them.
- A PC finds blood on his clothes or blankets, with no obvious source.
- A PC finds an old ivory pipe; whether he keeps it or throws it away, he keeps finding it again and again in new places.
- The PCs wake up one day without shadows; their shadows return without explanation 24 hours later.
- All background animal noises, such as insects churring or birds chirping, abruptly cease.

- Random patterns—frost forming on a window, ripples in the water, dark clouds in the sky, spilled ale—form the symbol of an evil entity, the face of a dead loved one, or the like.
- Every mirror a specific PC looks at suddenly cracks, always in the same pattern.
- A storm brews up swiftly out of an empty, open sky.
- Animals (even domestic or even-tempered ones) suddenly grow hostile at the PCs' approach. Flocks of crows or other birds start to attack them; horses kick, cats scratch, and dogs bite. Small creatures perch on nearby trees or ledges or in rat holes, glowering at the PCs as they wake up or pass by.
- Spiders (or some other innocuous vermin) are attracted to a particular PC; they act like overfond pets who nestle into his clothing, attempt to share his bed, bring him tiny gifts of food (web-wrapped living flies), and the like.
- The PCs discover that perfectly preserved and fresh rations have rotted overnight.
- A PC's reflection in a mirror is out of sync with his actions, delayed by a split second as if it had to wait to see what he did before mimicking him.
- A PC discovers a piece of the last monster or person he killed mixed in with his rations.
- A portrait, statue, or mosaic seems to have changed slightly each time the PCs pass by it.
- Footsteps echo through a house or hallway, with no apparent source.
- A PC has a sudden premonition of doom for the peaceful village his group is currently passing through.
- Somewhere in the distance, a baby cries. In a matter of minutes, the sound changes to a young child shrieking, then a young woman screaming, then an old woman choking, then silence.
- A priest in the midst of an important religious ceremony suddenly becomes unable to speak his god's name.
- A PC hears a voice scream in the distance; it sounds like his own.
- A character eating a piece of fruit discovers that the seeds he spits out are in fact human teeth.
- A PC encased in heavy armor feels the touch of something that feels like cold, wet, blind mice squirming between his armor and skin; removing the armor reveals nothing amiss.
- Curtains or furnishings move as though something brushed against them, yet nobody is in position to have done so and no breeze blows.
- No nonmagical attempt at creating fire—be it with flint and steel, tindertwigs, or even rubbing sticks together—will ignite even the driest piece of wood or scrap of parchment.
- A PC awakens and looks around; everything around him seems two-dimensional and artificial for half a second before the world reverts to normal.
- For a single long moment, a PC cannot remember his own name nor what he looks like. He is filled with a conviction that his real name, whatever it is, is quite different.
- A character hears the soft giggling of a little girl, or distant music; nobody else can hear it.
- A PC's holy symbol begins to weep blood or to bleed from nonexistent wounds.
- The PCs awaken after camping or resting for a night; one PC has bite wounds on his neck, arms, and legs, while another feels far too full to eat breakfast.
- The smoke of a torch or campfire coils around a specific individual as though embracing or entrapping him.
- Screams, calls for help, or moans of ecstasy come from beneath the ground of a cemetery.
- An item—perhaps a well-loved toy, or a parent's favorite necklace—turns up in the bottom of a character's backpack; the character hasn't seen this item since he was a child.
- A PC feels suddenly nauseous and vomits; mixed in with the half-digested food are recognizable humanoid parts.
- The PCs awaken after camping one night to find an extra horse, saddled and ready to go, tied with theirs; it travels with the PCs if not prevented but is gone after they camp the next night.
- A character begins to dream of his companions each dying horribly; as the dreams progress night after night he realizes that he's the one slaying them.
- A character begins to hear a whispering voice that none of his companions can hear. Sometimes it repeats everything he says in mocking tones; sometimes it warns him against treachery from other party members.
- A PC's horse abruptly turns carnivorous. Its personality has not changed; it simply will no longer eat anything but meat, preferably raw.
- Everyone in town stops what he is doing, stares intently at the passing party, and hisses softly. They then resume their normal business, continuing conversations broken off in mid-word. If questioned, the townsfolk have no memory of the incident.
- A PC coming home, or returning to a safe refuge such as an ally's home or a concealed cave, finds footprints leading into his room or area. Investigation reveals nobody present, but the footprints only go in, not out.
- A character opens his canteen and finds it brimming with blood.
- The sound of a whetstone sharpening a blade can be clearly heard not far off, yet neither the direction nor location can be determined.
- A strange moss grows somewhere it shouldn't, such as along the blade of a PC's favorite weapon or on his tongue.
- Something scuttles across the floor just behind the last PC in line; when he turns, it's gone.
- Rats are either being driven away from a certain place or fleeing on their own; no one knows why.
- The PCs see a vast sailing ship, shrouded in mist, crossing a landlocked meadow as it sails toward them, passes through them, and dissipates.
- Each time a PC glances into a mirror, his peripheral vision picks up someone else's reflection; when he turns for a second glance, he sees only herself.
- Characters who make Knowledge (history) or (nature) checks realize that the wood of the floorboards in one particular room is ancient, far older than the rest of the house.
- The PCs keep hearing what sounds like muffled sobbing, but there's nobody around.
- After entering a long-sealed tomb or abandoned house, the PCs find a bowl full of fresh fruit.
- The wind seems to whistle a nursery rhyme to one of the PCs.
- The PCs hear a door with a squeaky hinge; when they reach it, it swings silently.
- The PCs seem to age at an accelerated rate (about one year per day) while they stay in a certain area; they revert to their normal age after leaving the area.
- A small, elaborate, highly decorated door has been built into the corner of a closet pantry.
- The eyes of a portrait on the wall track a specific PC.
- The PCs stumble across an area so dark that *light* spells have no effect, but it does not radiate any magic.
- A doorknocker, when touched, triggers a *magic mouth* full of bloody shark teeth.
- A single window of a fine house has been boarded up for no discernible reason.

- A successful Search or Spot check reveals that all the furniture in a particular room was recently moved around, then meticulously put back in place.
- All the clothes in the closet are stained with blood, but there's no blood anywhere else.
- The only door to the cellar is reinforced with iron bars and locked from the inside.
- As a PC stares at a portrait on the wall, its features change until they depict his own, but he is clearly older in the portrait. If a second PC does the same, the portrait again changes to mimic his features, but this time the face shown is clearly that of a long-dead corpse in an advanced state of decay. The portrait then slowly reverts to its original state.
- While a PC is looking at herself in a small round mirror, his image is suddenly attacked from behind. He sees his reflection die in agony only inches away on the other side of the mirror, leaving behind only a blood-splattered surface, without ever seeing what attacked his image. Thereafter he casts no reflection for three days, after which his image appears as normal.
- A PC's touch suddenly withers and blackens living plants, then the effect ceases as suddenly as it began.
- A cleric awakens to find he's gripped his holy symbol so tightly that his hands are cut.
- A rogue awakens to find that his fingers have been stained an inky black while he slept and his forehand branded with an odd mark that quickly fades.
- A fighter awakens to find himself panting and sweating, his blade covered in gore, although he's fought no enemies.
- A wizard opens his spellbook to find pages covered in ramblings in a foreign language, all written in blood in his own handwriting; after a minute the strange writing fades and the pages resume their normal appearance.
- The PCs find that all their rope has sprouted leaves and thorns.
- A PC wakes gasping for breath and finds he is throttling himself with his left hand while his right hand lies numb and inert; it takes a round or two for his numb right hand to pry the left hand off, whereupon both return to normal.
- At the stroke of midnight, all animals in a small town begin to shake uncontrollably, howl, and attempt to hide.
- The PCs enter a valley where it never gets brighter than dusk, even at midday.
- One (or more) of the PCs hears the soft but insistent buzzing of flies over carrion.
- After a night of troubled sleep, one of the PCs wakes to find himself in a strange place—an alleyway, swimming in the middle of a lake, embracing a long-dead corpse on a slab in a masoleum.
- One part of a house or town has an unpleasant, not-quite-identifiable smell.
- The PCs hear whispered conversation coming from around a corner but turn it to find nobody there.
- The local church appears gray and decayed, although the townspeople seem cheery.
- Smoke trickles from a chimney, but when the PCs enter the fireplace is cold and dead.
- The PCs glimpse a cheerful roadside hamlet not far down the road, but when they arrive they find it a long-abandoned decaying ruin.
- After a few hours in a new town, it slowly dawns on the PCs that there are no children.
- One word: Fog.

THE VILLAIN OF A HORROR ENCOUNTER

The heart of any good horror encounter is the villain. Regardless of your campaign world, the bad guy of your horror encounter will probably be an entity with its own ideas, ambitions, and characteristics. Thanks to the myriad of options D&D offers, a DM can craft a worthy adversary from all sorts of raw materials. The villain need not even be a person: a cursed site or sentient object can serve just as well, or something totally impersonal such as a plague of contagious madness or cannibalism.

It's an easy task to model a D&D villain on a character from popular fantasy. Tolkien's Saruman is the very archetype of an evil wizard. Many evil warriors who serve a greater evil power owe their genesis to the Horned King of Lloyd Alexander's *The Chronicles of Prydain*. *Beowulf*'s Grendel is the model of many modern monsters, and even Goliath has appeared, at least conceptually, in tales that involve a hulking, nigh-unbeatable warrior. To take from more modern examples, it's a matter of only a little effort to create a D&D equivalent of Zedar from *The Belgariad* (David Eddings) or Voldemort from the Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling.

It's nearly as easy to take villainous inspiration from nonfantasy material, as long as it's the general concepts, not the specific details, that you carry over. One can easily imagine, for instance, that Lord Soth of *Dragonlance* fame was inspired (if only unconsciously) by Darth Vader. Both of these villains were good knights who fell to evil through pride and arrogance. Both are armor-clad, hulking warriors with mystical and martial prowess. Both serve a greater entity but have their own agendas, and both have a soft spot for a loved one. Yet each is clearly his own character as well and fits perfectly into his own niche.

Other science fiction worlds can be mined for material. The Terminator could be transmuted into a powerful golem, or perhaps an inevitable. Predators could become a powerful goblinoid race or perhaps an offshoot of githyanki. The Vorlons and Shadows of *Babylon 5* could be recast as outsiders. The kythons of *Book of Vile Darkness* are a perfect example of the concept of Geigeresque aliens in D&D, but almost any animalistic demon or draconic entity could serve the same purpose.

Horror tales are, of course, an ideal source of inspiration, given the theme of *Heroes of Horror*. Mr. Barlow of *'Salem's Lot* and his efforts to convert the entire population of a village into vampires can serve as a ready-made D&D plot. The various spells and powers available in the game combine to allow even the strangest, creepiest effects. For instance, the horrified corpses left in Samara's wake in *The Ring* could be the result of a *phantasmal killer* spell, with the movie's cursed video reworked as a cursed book or painting. While they wouldn't necessarily be ghosts, the notion of undead who do not realize they are undead, à la *The Sixth Sense*, makes for interesting villains—or even victims. Also consider the various entities that possess the ability to haunt dreams. Combined with the rules for dream-adventures presented in Chapter 3, a DM can easily create a Freddy Krueger-style character to bedevil players.

Period pieces and adventures also offer a wealth of inspiration. The corrupt sheriff of *Unforgiven* could become a self-serving captain of the watch. *Raiders of the Lost Ark*'s Belloq is a rival adventurer and treasure hunter, serving only his own ambition and leaving a trail of bodies in his wake. Jeff Long's novel *The Descent* offers a convincing model for the Underdark and the horrors that go with it. And just about every James Bond film presents an over-the-top villain just waiting to be transplanted to a dark castle and given magic items.

Ultimately, villains can come from literally anywhere, with just a small amount of alteration. Keep your eyes open, and the villain of your next campaign might just introduce himself to you from the strangest of places.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

A villain can be made much more frightening by means of game statistics. One of the most terrifying encounters PCs can face is one they believe to be well beyond their capacity to defeat. Although it's generally a bad idea to put parties up against villains whose Challenge Ratings are far above anything they would normally be able to defeat, it's a perfectly valid way of filling players' hearts with terror, especially if the PCs have the option of fleeing in terror—this time. If you have players who insist on thinking in terms of game statistics every time they face a monster, watch those players' faces as the metagame realization of what their character are facing slowly dawns. Now, that's horror!

Along these lines, consider using the Advancement entry in a monster's statistics block as a means of upping the horror ante. Many monsters in the *Monster Manual* become larger as they advance in Hit Dice, and this can be the perfect way to reveal to the characters the nature of the predicament they face. Describing a creature as being Gargantuan, when the garden-variety example of the creature is only Large, is likely to at first disquiet and then strike fear into the heart of players who have only encountered the normal version of the creature before.

Alternatively, the issue of apparent difficulty can itself be a terror tactic on the part of a devious DM. Since striking terror into the players is the surest way of ensuring that the characters feel fear or anxiety, the villain's appearance can matter more than its actual abilities. Consider a villain who kills his victims by poking two holes in their throat and draining their life's blood into a cask. What roleplayer isn't going to assume, at least at first, that the villain is a vampire? Low-level adventurers who realize the difficulty a true vampire would pose will be frightened of confronting him, afraid of even touching him, and terrified when he simply shrugs off their attempts to turn or control him. Deceptions such as this can provide the hook that allows an encounter to develop. Don't be afraid of mixing truths with lies, as that will only increase the horror.

The flip side of this coin is the notion that the numbers exist to serve the bad guys, too. Players hate to admit it, but some of the most frightening encounters are ones in which the characters are forced to accept a limitation on their otherwise reliable abilities. Dungeon-crawling through bad conditions (or, worse yet, fighting in them) can be a waking nightmare for PCs who have grown accustomed to their party's well-oiled machine team play. Some effective limitations include hampered visibility (up to and including impenetrable magical darkness), cramped conditions that impose combat penalties, reduced mobility that makes it harder for the PCs to get to the monsters than vice versa (or to get away), and zones of antimagic or antipsionics, all of which should scare most players on principle alone. In a horror encounter, even more than in a standard one, a villain who expects company will often use his knowledge of an area to his utmost advantage, thereby forcing limits even on parties that come prepared.

Some of the most frightful encounters involve limitations on the characters' capabilities

Illus. by R. Gallegos

UNUSUAL VILLAINS

A nefarious bad guy isn't the only way of driving home the horror. Some of the most terrifying villains are those with no bodies or those who can't be defeated by force of arms alone. At times, a terrifying situation can evoke more fear than a terrifying creature. Consider the following unusual villains:

Countdown to Doom: In this scenario, the primary source of dread comes from the knowledge that time is running out. Perhaps the PCs are traveling through a harsh environment, such as deep underwater, and the spells they're relying upon to survive are running out. Perhaps the stars are almost right for a dimensional gate to open, releasing a horde of creatures from the Far Realms. . . .

Freaky Friday: One terrifying scenario that's become a roleplaying standard is the notion of a drastic biological or supernatural transformation. In these encounters, one or more of the PCs find themselves fundamentally altered, usually with no apparent cause. Maybe one character wakes up to find that his arms have changed into tentacles, or he has switched bodies with another character, or his gender has changed and he's now female. At first this last scenario might seem more humorous than horrifying, but eventually the PCs should begin worrying why the villain is changing

all his foes to the same gender, knowing from his other deeds that the answer can't be good.

Trapped: Another horror standard traps or imprisons the heroes somewhere (or in some*thing*) from which they must find a way out. Scenarios of this sort create a mood of intense claustrophobia, and dealing with it can be simultaneously one of the most exhilarating and disturbing of roleplaying experiences. The DM knows this approach has been successful when the players start acting like they have cabin fever.

Overwhelmed: One of the most effective ways of raising the fear factor is to pile on the troubles. Consider, for example, any one of the above scenarios—but with a ravenous monster thrown in for good measure. The PCs have to prevail against both their situation and a powerful enemy. A good DM can make even stone-cold veterans chew their fingernails with this setup. The only thing worse than being trapped in a strange temple is being trapped in a strange temple during a countdown to doomsday with something big, mean, hungry, and seemingly unstoppable.

VILLAINOUS TRAITS

The following traits can help make major villains into memorable characters. They can be assigned to run-of-the-mill minions as easily as to nonhostile NPC villagers and potential allies. Such traits should not penalize the character unduly, but rather be a visible sign of some trauma he has experienced in the past. If the DM is using the new taint mechanic described in Chapter 4, these characteristics can serve as alternative manifestations of corruption (see page 63) or depravity (see page 65).

- Always whispers, leaning forward conspiratorially as though concerned that those nearby might hear.
- Makes no sound whatsoever when he walks.
- Never blinks.
- Always looks just past the person he's speaking to, never making eye contact.
- Chuckles darkly at random intervals.
- Wears a choker of vines; blood streaks his neck from the thorns.
- Covered in occult tattoos or brands that seem to subtly change from time to time.
- Eyes are dark and soulless; pupils never contract when exposed to bright light.
- Fingers constantly twitch, as though eager to grab and throttle.
- Facial features slightly deformed or off-kilter.
- Face never shows emotion and has slightly shiny look, as if made of wax.
- Constantly looks over his shoulder as though expecting someone.
- Recoils at the sight of a mirror, refusing to look within; keeps any reflective surface nearby covered with cloth.
- Carries a ghastly trophy, such as an eye gouged from the last enemy he killed (replaced each time he defeats a new foe), the leftmost finger of the left hand of each of his minions, a collection of scalps, and so forth.
- Smells strongly of rot, although appears healthy.
- Hideously scarred, either from injury or disease.
- Lips are bruised and split; he bites them from time to time so that blood trickles down the sides of his mouth.
- Teeth are unnaturally pointed; from time to time he stops to file them while interacting with the PCs.
- Eats only raw meat from the internal organs of creatures he personally kills.
- Crawling with flies, fleas, lices, or other vermin.
- Face always marked by minor scratches, slashes, and cuts. These heal over the course of a few minutes and then suddenly reappear, as if inflicted by some tiny implacable invisible foe.
- Wears a corroded bronze mask that covers his face except for the mouth hole; it could only fit so snuggly on a face without a nose. Although there are no eye holes, he moves and reacts as if he could still see perfectly.
- One hand is a badly stitched-on monkey paw.
- Won't stop grinning.
- Practices strange religious rites and observances that match no faith known to others, such as adding "holy salt" to anything he eats or drinks (including potions he administers to others).
- Mutters the same prayer, scripture, or quotation over and over.
- Worms constantly slither from one pocket to another.
- Speaks with and makes gestures toward empty space.
- Asks to wear a PC's shoes, "just for a minute."
- Completely hairless, even lacking eyelashes.
- Fascinated by watching others sleep.
- Fascinated by watching others eat.
- Appears to be listening to some unheard sound or voice.
- Fingers have multiple extra joints that bring tentacles to mind.
- Wears a necklace of small, withered hands that slowly clench and unclench.
- Flinches from or shows revulsion toward holy icons.
- Constantly fawns over those around his.
- Grunts or moans frequently with no apparent cause.
- Constantly refers to, speaks to, and interacts with an imaginary friend, possibly someone long dead.
- Refers to other people as "it," never "him," or "you," even when speaking to them.
- Stares a little too intently at the PCs as they talk, never looking away.
- Has a glass eye which he keep pulling out and putting back in every other round when lost in thought; occasionally pops it into his mouth instead.
- Speaks enviously of the dead and the irretrievably insane.
- Asks for a small sample of hair and skin (or blood) from each PC, "just in case."
- Eyes have slitted irises like a snake's, or no pupils whatsoever.
- Has a lazy eye that always seems to leer at female party members.
- Face crusted with pustules and boils that occasionally break open and seep pus.
- Bottom lip droops and sags, as though he has no control over it.
- Teeth are jagged and mangled, as though he has been chewing steel.
- Although centuries old, he still has the body of a child.
- Although still in adolescence, his hair is turning white and his face taking on the crow's-feet and wrinkles of old age.
- Forehead marred by small bony knobs that look a bit too much like horns.
- What looks like hair are actually meticulously executed tattoos, or perhaps naturally occurring skin patterns.
- Gabbles so fast that he can only gasp for breath.
- Head is large and misshapen, with tufts of uneven hair growth and bald patches.
- Skin is peeling off in great, curling sheets.
- An adult has the height of a small child but possesses a deep and resonant voice and full beard.

- Ichor constantly drips from one eye.
- Fingernails are lacking entirely; gnaws fingertips to bloody stumps while talking to PCs.
- Fasts two days out of every three; so skeletally thin that he could be mistaken for a corpse.
- Hands tremble; one eye has nervous tic; drags one leg when he walks.
- One leg has been replaced by a cylindrical metal cage containing a homunculus.
- Slurs his words when he talks, as though his tongue were numb.
- Abruptly begins speaking in a way that sounds exactly like someone the PCs know.
- Coughs constantly while talking to the PCs; subject to fits of racking coughs; coughs up blood from time to time into an already blood-soaked handkerchief.
- Both eyes are horribly bloodshot, as though he hadn't slept in weeks.
- Speaks through a terrible wheeze, as though gasping desperately for air;
- Nose trickles blood constantly; he eagerly licks up.
- Sweats profusely and appears flushed, even when sitting still.
- Gets visibly enraged at the mention of an otherwise mundane word or phrase.
- Seized by sudden fits of extreme terror for no apparent cause.
- One eye is missing and there's a button sewn in the back of the gaping socket.
- Carries a ragged, battered doll that he lavishes with attention and talks to in baby-talk.
- Whenever he walks into the room, the hairs rise on the back of the PCs' necks.
- Picks absently at a large, infected scab.
- Pulls determinedly at his hair, which is beginning to come away in clumps.
- Kneels whenever he speaks to the PCs, and prostrates himself when they walk away.
- Speaks through clenched teeth, as though his jaw were wired shut.
- Has ritual wounds that refuse to heal (stigmata).
- Bears a perfect likeness to someone the PCs know.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTER: "TO GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE"

"To Grandmother's House" occurs in a light wood on a lake, within a day's travel of a small village. In this scenario, the PCs are faced with the combined horrors of innocence destroyed, cannibalism, and the threat of eternal servitude.

The two primary villains are a green hag (*Monster Manual*, page 143) known as Grandmother and a gray jester (new creature: see page 151) called Uncle Chortle. Both were named by the children they have victimized.

The precise relationship between Grandmother and Uncle Chortle is unclear. At times, they act like mother and son; at others, like brother and sister; at still others, like lovers (a horrid image in its own right). Despite being creatures of great evil, they seem to care for each other. It is obvious that Grandmother is the dominant member of the pair. Despite their affection, neither is willing to die for the other.

ENCOUNTER LEVEL

"To Grandmother's House" is an EL 7 encounter. The green hag has a CR of 5, the gray jester a CR of 4. The presence of half a dozen bleak ones (see page 151), local children enslaved to Uncle Chortle, raises the total EL to 7. While the children are not dangerous individually, their tactics include striking from a distance and from multiple directions, and they will readily and mindlessly sacrifice themselves for either Grandmother or the jester.

DMs seeking an easier encounter might remove the gray jester entirely. In this case, Grandmother instead controls the children through use of various herbal drugs and *eyes of charming*. If the DM wishes to make the encounter more difficult, he can advance the hag and/or the gray jester, or include adults with class levels among the bleak ones.

BACKGROUND

Grandmother and Uncle Chortle are using the children of Dunford, a small farming community on the edge of civilization, as a combination work force and livestock herd. Uncle Chortle feeds off the laughter and joy of the children, who then either end up as meals for Grandmother or are sent back into town to lure more children to Grandmother's house. They make the trip by way of a partially overgrown game trail that few of the residents of Dunford remember.

The PCs might be passing through town on the way to somewhere else, with Dunford is the last settled spot in this region, when they hear that several children have gone missing recently. They might decide to look into it out of the goodness of their hearts, or the villagers might offer what riches they can scrounge (probably no more than a few dozen gold pieces) to hire the PCs. Alternatively, the heroes might stumble upon the lake, the house, or the game trail while exploring the wild and find traces of the children there.

THE ENCOUNTER

The areas described below are keyed to the map entitled "Grandmother's House" on page 15.

The Game Trail

This is an old trail, partly overgrown and nearly forgotten by everyone except the children. Following it south approximately 8 miles leads the PCs back to Dunford.

The trail is obvious here, but nearer town it's masked by thick overgrowth. Finding the trail without the aid of a local requires a DC 10 Search or Survival check.

As the PCs draw within a mile of Grandmother's house, the sounds of the wood subtly change. The calls of animals seem to transform into the whimpers and cries of terrified children, then return to normal. The change is so subtle that it initially requires a DC 15 Listen check to notice. Within half a mile of the house, however, the terrified cries become clear. The sounds appear to be coming from the northeast, but they fade away if the PCs attempt to follow them. If the PCs make a second attempt to follow the sounds, the whimpers abruptly escalate into a shriek of agony and then go silent. The animal calls slowly resume and remain normal from that point onward.

The Wood

In these areas, the forest thickens. If the PCs wish to make their way deeper into the woods, they need to blaze their

own trail, although the terrain is not terribly difficult. They might, if the DM wishes, encounter various random monsters if they delve too deeply into the woods. These monsters, normally foreign to these parts, are drawn by the growing evil in the region.

The path continues north, cutting a swath through the otherwise thickening forest. It slowly peters out approximately a mile beyond the house.

Lake Serene

A small inland lake, this is the source of the Summerflow, which passes through Dunford. The sound of gentle waves lapping against the shore, if listened to for more than a moment, transforms into the screech of fingernails on stone. PCs who look into the deep waters see reflections of screaming children staring back at them. The lake smells of brine, despite being fresh water and completely safe to drink. In all cases, these effects exist only in the vicinity of the house; elsewhere along the shore, the water is entirely normal.

Grandmother's House

This rickety, two-story wooden house appears normal from a distance. A chimney gives off a thin tendril of smoke that appears somehow greasy. The uneaten remains of Grandmother's victims are buried in a garden out back, their flesh feeding the vegetables. The entire property, house and garden alike, is tainted due to the events that have taken place here. PCs feel slightly ill the instant they step within 100 feet of the house and must make all relevant saving throws to avoid gaining taint (see page 62 for the rules relating to acquiring taint). Characters who eat any of the vegetables grown here gain 1 point of taint with no save permitted.

Inside the house, a large common room containing a long table, chairs, a fireplace, and a wood-burning stove takes up the whole first floor. Shaky wooden stairs lead up to a second floor holding half a dozen small bedrooms.

What the PCs see when they enter the house or peek in the windows depends on their actions. The DM should determine, using relevant skill checks, whether the PCs have been detected. If the party members have made no effort to hide their approach, Grandmother and Uncle Chortle automatically detect them.

If Grandmother and Uncle Chortle Detect the PCs: Uncle Chortle hides in the shadows beneath the stairs (the DM can assume he takes 10, for a total of 22). Using *disguise self* to appear as a kindly old woman, Grandmother gathers the bleak ones and huddles in the corner. Assuming the PCs do not immediately appear hostile, she attempts to convince them that she and the children are prisoners of a horrible beast that keeps them here and has been slaughtering townsfolk. She claims it dwells near the lake and offers to lead the PCs to it. If they agree, she leads them out amid the children. As soon as the PCs reach the door, Uncle Chortle attacks from behind (possibly with surprise), and Grandmother and the bleak ones join the battle the instant the PCs turn to face the gray jester.

If the PCs Arrive Unexpectedly: Looking into the house, the PCs witness a truly horrific sight. An old woman (Grandmother spends most of her time in this guise) sits

Illus. by M. Phillippi

Grandmother loves having the children over for dinner

at the head of a refectory table. Lying in the center of the table is a dirty, naked child of about 10 years old. He is clearly alive but stares upward emotionlessly. Several other children with equally dead eyes are gathered about the table. As the PCs watch, the children carve small pieces off the girl with tiny knives and feed the quivering, bloody chunks to the old woman! Blood drips freely off the sides of the table, eventually draining out between the slats in the floor. Standing behind it all, directing the children's actions, is a figure clad in dark jester's motley. The PCs might be able to attack with surprise.

In either case, Grandmother and Uncle Chortle use the same tactics once combat is joined. They attempt to flank the PCs, or at least stay far enough from each other that they cannot both be caught by a single offensive spell. They have the bleak ones attack from all sides, using knives or slings. Grandmother and Uncle Chortle often team up against a single opponent with their spell-like abilities, draining both Strength and Charisma. If a foe clearly relies on one ability or the other, however, they will redirect their tactics accordingly to eliminate him swiftly. Either one of the pair will flee if reduced to 25% of full normal hit points, or to 50% of full hit points if the other has already been slain. In either case, they abandon the bleak ones to their fate; the children have standing orders to fight until slain.

Conclusion

If the PCs search the house, they find digging tools on the back porch, which they might use to unearth the buried remains of the other missing children. In the cupboard is the accumulated treasure of this pair of horrors: 600 gp worth of various coins and baubles, a child-sized silver bracelet worth 75 gp (an heirloom of one of the families back in Dunford), and *gloves of arrow snaring* (neither Grandmother nor Uncle Chortle knew what these were). The gloves have been here for some time, and might (25% chance) already have gained their own innate taint. Additionally, the house is adorned with decorations and art made up of children's bones.

The PCs should gain experience appropriate to the encounter if they defeat both Grandmother and Uncle Chortle. PCs receive no XP for slaughtering the bleak ones but do receive a bonus of 100 XP for each child they return to Dunford; this increases to 400 XP for each child that they somehow succeed in restoring to mental health. Each character should also receive 100 XP if they choose to return the bracelet rather than keep it.

The strange effects of the region (sounds, reflections, and so on) grow less common after the horrors are driven off but, due to the remaining taint, they never vanish entirely.

Sample Encounter: "Annalee's Baby"

In "Annalee's Baby," the PCs find themselves entering the village of Eastbrook, a small human settlement nestled in a rolling green countryside. In this encounter, the characters are faced with the twin horrors of being hunted and trapped, as well as the more insidious horror that comes from the plot's misdirection.

Two villains feature in this scenario, but the PCs might only ever know of one. The first is a ghost (*Monster Manual*, page 117) named Jonah Parsons, and the other is his wife

Annalee—or, more accurately, the demonic entity possessing their newborn daughter Eve. The entity in question is an unholy scion (see page 155). It is more than likely that the PCs assume Jonah is the only villain, but clever players (and DMs) can and should find a way to work the truth into play, even if it comes a little too late to save Jonah.

ENCOUNTER LEVEL

"Annalee's Baby" is an EL 5 encounter, making it ideal for lower-level parties. As a ghost, Jonah Parsons is a CR 5 creature. The true evil in Eastbrook, the unholy scion inside Eve, is only a CR 2 creature, due to the fact that its host is a newborn baby. DMs seeking a more challenging counter can raise Jonah's levels before he became a ghost or advance the age and experience of the unholy scion to where it becomes a threat in its own right.

BACKGROUND

Less than a year ago, Jonah and Annalee Parsons were a happy couple in a happy community. They had just found out that they were expecting a child. While Jonah, a researcher and scribe by profession, was working overtime to provide for all that they would soon need, Annalee was busily converting their unused barn into a study for her husband, now that his former study was going to become the new baby's room.

Not long into the pregnancy, however, Jonah began to notice a change in his wife. She wasn't doing anything different or unusual, but she just didn't seem like the same person. The one person in whom he could confide his concerns blamed them on the combination of the changes of pregnancy and the anxiety felt by every expectant father. But Jonah was not convinced, and he began to investigate his wife's condition. Within three months, Jonah was dead—stabbed to death by town guards in his own study; records indicate that he was "slain while attempting to resist a lawful arrest."

What actually happened is that Jonah began to suspect that something had infected his wife's mind, soul, or both. But before he could discover what was really going on, and perhaps find a way to bring back the Annalee he once knew, the thing inside her sensed his suspicion and contrived a way to silence him. The unholy scion made its mother, now some five months pregnant, scratch and beat herself before running in terror to the local constable. She claimed her husband had gone mad and locked himself into his study after nearly killing her. When the soldiers arrived, they took Jonah by surprise and, in the confusion, mortally wounded him.

THE ENCOUNTER

The story picks up some five months after the death of Jonah Parsons. His daughter, Eve, was born recently, and with her birth came the return of her father as a ghost. What Jonah had begun to uncover is that inside his barn dwelled a dark entity that began to take over the unborn child growing inside his wife as she worked to convert the site into a study for him. Unknown to anyone, the site had once been the location of a shrine dedicated to Cas, the demigod of spite, and that lingering taint was an open invitation to demonic forces to take up residence in Cas's absence.

Cas, rarely one to forgive a slight of any kind, offered Jonah's restless soul a glimpse of what the Lord of Spite would see as hope. Jonah arose as a ghost, filled with the knowledge that the source of his wife's madness and his own death was the child she had borne in her womb. Now that Eve is no longer inside Annalee, Jonah's spirit seeks to slay the demon child. He couldn't save himself or his daughter, but he has one last chance to save his loving wife.

When the PCs arrive in Eastbrook, it is just before dusk and the town is all but deserted. The DM should play up the eeriness of trotting into a pleasant-looking village in the late afternoon but not seeing a single man, woman, or child out in the streets. When they draw closer to the center of town, they see a magnificent church dominating a pleasant, prettified square, and that's when they finally see some sign of life.

A woman and her child, a boy of about ten, are running to the church on the other side of the square. They pay no heed to the PCs unless the PCs call out or otherwise draw attention to themselves. When she sees them, the woman gasps and advises them to follow her to the church: "Quickly, now!" Once inside, the PCs see what appears to be the entire town huddling in fright within. Many of the townsfolk hover around one person in particular, a gray-faced woman holding an infant. This is Annalee Parsons and her daughter Eve.

The townsfolk explain to the PCs that an evil spirit is on the loose, and they relate the tale of Jonah Parsons, a man who tried to kill his wife and unborn child in life and who has returned from beyond the grave to finish the job. For two days now, most of the town has been spending the hours of darkness inside the safety of the church with Annalee and Eve, where they believe the undead menace cannot reach them. They all seem both protective of Jonah's family and legitimately frightened, but perceptive PCs (who succeed on a DC 20 Spot or Sense Motive check) notice that Annalee seems rather calm for a woman whose dead husband even now seeks a way of killing her daughter and herself.

Whether or not the PCs offer to help, the townsfolk tell them that Jonah's ghost was last seen in his converted study, an outbuilding of the Parsons family home. Allow the PCs to ask any questions of the townsfolk before heading out to find Jonah, but remember—they know only the story that Eve (through her mother) wants them to know.

Jonah's Study

The Parsons house is located down a little country lane, about a mile from the church. It is a wooden structure, largely featureless and quiet but for the occasional slapping of one of the barn doors in the early evening wind. The PCs hear no sound coming from within. When they enter, they see a large wooden desk dominating the center of an open area between two rows of unused horse stalls. The hay and dirt has been cleared away, leaving a rather tidy and spacious study area. Hovering behind the desk, bent over a large tome that's open on the desk before him, is Jonah's ghost.

He is dressed in the simple, practical clothes worn by other townsfolk in Eastbrook, and a pair of spectral spectacles rests at the very end of his nose. When the PCs arrive, Jonah is lost in deep thought, having discovered what he

The Village of Eastbrook

1. Temple
2. Town Hall
3. Town Square
4. Constable's Station
5. Inn of Four Winds
6. Winter Wolf Tavern
7. Tailor
8. General Store
9. Bowyer Fletcher
10. Blacksmith
11. Tanner
12. Butcher

One square = 10 feet

Illus. by W. England

Johan discovers a way to save his wife

believes might be a way of saving his wife. Given his temperament, however, he does not react well to the sudden intrusion of armed individuals into his private study (yet again). A brief flash of what appears to be recognition crosses the ghost's face—this is the spectral equivalent of déjà vu, as Jonah brutally and suddenly reexperiences the moments that led up to his death—and then the spirit flies into a rage. Allow Jonah the chance to make a DC 15 Will save in order to calm himself and realize these aren't the same soldiers who killed him. Even if he fails the first save, allow him another, should the PCs refrain from attacking.

If the PCs are cautious enough to want to speak with the spirit, and the spirit is rational enough to want to speak, have Jonah explain his side of the story. The DM can have him roll Diplomacy, if a random element to the success of his plea is required.

If the PCs listen and agree to help him, it will mean agreeing to help an evil creature slay a human baby girl. This is not the sort of decision that weighs lightly on the average hero's conscience, regardless of the evidence presented in its favor . . . and, despite what he knows, Jonah Parsons doesn't have very much evidence at all. Should the PCs not listen, or if combat begins before Jonah gets the chance to speak with the PCs, Jonah fights to the last but tries to reason with them even while combat goes on. One favorite tactic is to use his malevolence to hide inside one of his foe's bodies, the better to talk to them while still pressing the attack. He knows that, barring strange circumstances, he'll be back even if the PCs succeed here today thanks to his rejuvenation ability.

If the PCs succeed in dissipating Jonah's spirit, and they want to have a look around, point them to the open tome on Jonah's desk. The book is called *Dark Doorways*, and it is open to a page that contains an entry about a type of demonic force that inhabits unborn children and forces the host to submit to all manner of diabolical influence.

Jonah Parsons CR 5

Male human ghost expert 4
LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Elven

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Dodge
hp 26 (4 HD)
Immune undead traits, incorporeal traits
Resist +4 turn resistance
Fort +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +4

Speed fly 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee incorporeal touch +3 (1d6) or
Melee corrupting touch +2 (1d6) against ethereal opponent
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2
Special Action malevolence 1/round (as *magic jar;* CL 10th, DC 16), manifestation

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Abilities Str 10, Dex 13, Con —, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 12
SQ rejuvenation
Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes
Skills Concentration +4, Diplomacy +7, Hide +9, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +12, Profession (scribe) +7, Search +9, Sense Motive +5, Spot +12

CONCLUSION

If the PCs search Jonah's study, they find a collection of books worth roughly 300 gp and a masterwork set of quills and inkwells worth roughly 80 gp. In addition, they find a few scattered coins totaling 27 gp inside the desk's storage compartments. If the PCs read through his papers, they can find a reference on one of the property deeds that mentions the barn's former owner as being one Anderton Rollings. A successful DC 18 Knowledge (local) check or a successful DC 21 Knowledge (history) check enables a PC to recall something about a man named Anderton Rollings, a local farmer, being linked with some dark god in the time after his disappearance from Eastbrook about ten years ago.

The PCs should gain experience appropriate to an EL 5 encounter if they succeed in dissipating Jonah's essence. Each PC should also receive a bonus XP award of up to 100 XP, depending on how they handle both the townsfolk and the scribe's ghost. Unless they leave Eastbrook immediately, however, the story won't end there. Jonah Parsons will return in 2d4 days, just as eager as ever to renew his hunt for his own flesh and blood. If the PCs agreed to hear him out, and believes that his baby daughter might indeed be some demon-spawn, then this encounter is but the first act in a much longer story. How it plays out is up to the DM—and, of course, the players.

NEW DEMIGOD: CAS

Demigod (Neutral Evil)

Also known as the Lord of Spite, the Red Grudge, and He Who Balances the Scales, Cas is the demigod of vengeance and of spite without end. He is the moose-headed god who nurses rage and fosters frustration. The scattered priesthood of Cas maintains that beneath the veneer of civilized folk lies the accumulated fire of all the injustices he has ever suffered, just waiting to be released; that all secretly worship Cas, even if only in their deepest, truest subconscious.

Legend maintains that Cas was once a mortal man (a farmer, if such tales are to be believed), and that he lived in quiet peace with his friends and neighbors for many years. Then some unfortunate happenstance caused a rift with his fellows in the community—one that eventually claimed the lives of Cas's entire family. Due to social politics, the offenders were never properly punished. In his rage, Cas appealed to the higher power in whom he had always believed. But when that higher power denied his appeal for justice, legend says that the sheer power of Cas's rage and will was enough for him to exalt himself, by means of some cosmic force, to divine godhood. After slaking his thirst for vengeance on the town that wronged him, Cas transformed into the freakish deity of spite he is today.

Portfolio: Spite, vengeance.

Symbol: A rack of blood-tipped antlers.

Domains: Destruction, Pain, Spite, Strength. The Pain domain appears in *Book of Vile Darkness*; the Spite domain is new and is detailed on page 126.

Cleric Training: The Lord of Spite is perhaps unique in the way that he gathers his flock. Although many cults devoted to his worship do exist, Cas prefers to come to those who seem to call out to him with their private thoughts and repressed urges. The soundless laments of those who seek vengeance for wrongdoing are as clamorous gongs to the ears of He Who Balances the Scales, and he is drawn to them even more than he is to those who already revere him and revel in his purpose.

Quests: Cas cares most for the repayment of dark debts. He will go to great lengths to ensure that his followers do their utmost to fulfill that end. When they do conjoin, his followers form cabals devoted to a single, specific end. Once that end is completed, they often disband until the next time their hunger for revenge is aroused. The Lord of Spite expects a would-be suppliant to complete a quest of her own before being indoctrinated fully into his congregation. Such quests always revolve around the subject pursuing some unfinished business for which he harbors great rage.

Prayers: Prayers to Cas are almost always spoken only after the supplicant has worked herself into near-hysteria with the pain and frustration of unrighted wrongs. It is understood that the Lord of Spite wishes to hear the pain in a worshiper's voice: The greater the anguish, the more inclined he will be to reward the prayer in some way.

Temples: Shrines to Cas are usually deeply personal affairs, and many individual worshipers don't maintain a specific place in which to pray. As a deity of secrecy and hidden pain, Cas actually prefers that most of his worshipers keep him nowhere but bottled up inside their own souls, where he is free to stoke the embers of their rage and discontent. When an actual temple to Cas does get built, it is usually in a quiet, unassuming location, far from the prying and judgmental eyes of others. Cas's temples tend to be small and secret places of primal instinct and emotion, light on pomp or decoration and heavy on the accumulated energy of men and women with rage to spare.

Rites: The rites that Cas's worshipers perform are not somber or complex rituals. They are Bacchanalian affairs, primal and pure—the congregants working one another into a state of frenzy, screaming out orgiastic diatribes in the demigod's name. The idea behind the rites of Cas's congregation is not catharsis but preparation for upcoming work to be done in the demigod's name. The church of Cas teaches that true catharsis comes only in righting a festering wrong.

Herald and Allies: The herald of Cas is a Huge devourer (*Monster Manual*, page 58) with 36 Hit Dice and a number of special abilities befitting its status. The foul thing makes off with the trapped soul of whomever it was sent to destroy or receive as an offering to Cas. If the devourer has a name, no one has ever learned it. It is simply (and effectively) known only as "the herald of Cas."

Cas is known to prefer working directly with those who revere him and seek his aid and strength. On rare occasions, he also works with evil outsiders of all types.

Favored Weapon: Heavy mace.

AVATAR OF CAS — CR 25

Male demigod
NE Large outsider (avatar)
Init +11; **Senses** tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +26, Spot +31
Languages Abyssal, Common, Druidic, Infernal, Sylvan; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 35, touch 21, flat-footed 28; Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility
hp 665 (35 HD), regeneration 5; **DR** 15/cold iron and piercing
Immune ability damage, ability drain, energy damage, energy drain, death magic, death from massive damage
Resist cold 30, fire 30; improved evasion; **SR** 28
Saves Fort +31, Ref +27, Will +26

Speed 60 ft. (12 squares), fly 100 ft. (perfect); woodland stride
Melee *ebon rod* +51/+46/+41/+36/+31/+26/+21 (2d6+21 plus 2d6 fire and 2d6 vicious/19–20) or
Melee gore +47 (1d8+12 plus 2d6 fire) and 2 claws +42 (1d8+12 plus 2d6 fire)
Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.
Base Atk +35/**Grp** +51
Atk Options Great Cleave, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack, favored enemy human +10, favored enemy good outsiders +8, favored enemy evil outsiders +6, favored enemy monstrous humanoids +4, favored enemy magical beasts +2
Special Actions Cas's avatar can freely exchange a prepared ranger spell for any spell that has to do with cursing the target (bestowing penalties and the like) or deception
Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 10th):
4th—*animal growth*, *commune with nature*, *summon nature's ally IV*, *tree stride*
3rd—*command plants* (DC 19), *diminish plants*, *plant growth*, *repel vermin* (DC 19)
2nd—*hold animal* (DC 18), *protection from energy*, *snare*, *spike growth* (DC 18), *wind wall*
1st—*entangle* (DC 17), *jump*, *longstrider*, *pass without trace*, *speak with animals*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th):
At will—*bestow curse* (DC 22), *command undead* (DC 20), *detect magic*, *enervation* (+42 ranged touch), *gaseous form*, *invisibility* (DC 20), *permanent image* (DC 24), *polymorph* (DC 22), *vampiric touch* (+47 melee touch)
1/day—grant one *wish* (to any nondivine, nongenie creature)

Abilities Str 35, Dex 24, Con 33, Int 18, Wis 22, Cha 26
SQ camouflage, hide in plain sight, swift tracker, wild empathy +28 (+24 magical beasts)
Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Endurance[B], Great Cleave, Improved Critical (mace), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Track[B], Weapon Focus (mace), Whirlwind Attack
Skills Appraise +34, Bluff +38, Concentration +31, Craft (all) +20, Decipher Script +20, Diplomacy +25, Handle Animal +28, Hide +27, Intimidate +38, Knowledge (history) +27, Knowledge (nature) +24, Knowledge (religion) +28, Listen +26, Move Silently +27, Profession (all applicable) +24, Sense Motive +36, Spellcraft +24, Spot +31, Survival +36

Heat (Ex) The avatar's red-hot body deals 2d6 points of fire damage whenever he hits in melee or, when grappling, each round he maintains a hold.
Possessions Cas's avatar carries the *ebon rod of ill will*, a minor artifact also known simply as the *rod of Cas*. This Large *+3 vicious heavy mace* deals both bludgeoning and piercing damage and acts as a bane weapon against any opponent who has ever injured Cas. See the full item description on page 134.

The avatar of Cas, demigod of spite

Illus. by Daarken

What stands before you is a tall, crimson-skinned figure with the head of a moose, and a rack of blood-soaked antlers jutting from his skull. His eyes are deep pools of black, which smolder with a crimson spark of malignant intelligence. The figure's torso and arms are those of a hairy, muscular man, but his lower half is like a minotaur's, ending in legs with cloven hooves. The menacing figure brandishes a large mace with an antlered head much like his own.

A sinister blend of man and beast, the Lord of Spite appears in a form that combines humanoid cunning with bestial fury. He stands over 12 feet in height, and his vast antlers stretch some 8 feet from point to point. Cas carries an enormous heavy mace, stained black and topped with antlers of its own.

Combat

Cas's avatar is a terrifying foe in combat. He relishes the thrill of the hunt and delights in enemies' fleeing battle so that he can stalk them at leisure. He usually uses his mace, the *ebon rod of ill will*, and gleefully charges into melee. He sometimes feigns weakness or an inability to hit opponents in order to lure a group of foes close enough for him to unleash a devastating attack combining both his Whirlwind Attack and Power Attack feats.

Power Attack: Cas's avatar uses his Power Attack feat intelligently, often switching back and forth from round to round between landing the maximum number of blows and dealing the maximum amount of damage per blow. He can subtract as much as 35 from his attack roll and add as much as 70 to his damage roll.

Illus. by E. Polak

Now that you've seen the basics of how to run a horror-themed encounter, running an entire horror adventure should be simple, right?

Well, not necessarily. A horror adventure is not just a standard adventure with a big scary monster or truly vile villain lurking at the heart of it all. After all, most well-designed adventures will have that, anyway. Nor is a horror adventure simply a string of horror encounters lined up together. In a single encounter, the focus is on maximum impact with minimal time. The encounter needs to hit hard, hit fast, and then be over so the DM and party can move on to the next one.

A horror adventure, by contrast, is a far more patient and methodical animal. It builds to a horrific culmination, often with false peaks and releases in the tension before the final climax. Horror adventures often include multiple horror encounters, but they should be placed with a deliberate rhythm rather than scattered about randomly; building up bit by bit to a finale with greater punch than any of its component parts. These stories should have their own feel, a sense of mood and theme that can only be obtained through careful selection of the specific encounters, rather than a random hodgepodge of even the most frightening events. Much of this chapter offers suggestions for setting the pace for a horror adventure, letting off the tension just enough so that your players don't grow overwhelmed but not so much that you lose momentum.

HORROR ADVENTURES IN NONHORROR CAMPAIGNS

The primary use of a horror adventure is as part of a horror campaign. Adventures, after all, are the building blocks of a campaign. If the specific stories aren't frightening, the end result certainly cannot be. Not every adventure in a horror campaign need be (or even should be) a horror adventure, but most of them ought to be. (See Chapter 3: A Horror Campaign for more on putting together entire campaigns.)

That said, there's no reason for the DM not to include the occasional horror adventure in a nonhorror campaign. Just as most action/science-fiction/fantasy TV series have the occasional scary episodes, or novels in these genres have some particularly intense scenes or chapters, so too can most campaigns benefit from the occasional injection of fear, gore, or true horror. But when is it most appropriate to do so?

Driving Home the Villain's Malevolence: It's an old trope—almost a cliché—but that's because it works. Let the villain demonstrate the depth of his wickedness with actions far more horrific than anything previously seen in the campaign. If the characters have been dealing with orc raiding parties that kill soldiers and kidnap women and children, then a serial killer who slaughters infants in their beds or a warlock who powers his magic with the tormented souls of the innocent substantially

ramps up the level of viciousness. If the players feel real discomfort at the DM's descriptions of a villain's crimes, it's a near certainty that their characters will develop a hatred for him unmatched by their reactions to previous NPCs, no matter how vile. (Don't overdo it, though; see the advice later in this chapter about respecting the comfort level of your players.)

Ensnaring the PCs in a Story Hook: Horror, by definition, has an emotional punch to it. The suffering of the innocent or of loved ones, the anguish inflicted by a terrible villain or monster, should ignite a burning need to make things right in the guts of all but the most selfish characters. The players might dismiss "just another goblin raid," but they're far less likely to ignore a phantom hunting down and butchering expectant mothers, or an old enemy who has kidnapped a PC's sister or old mentor.

Of course, if the players aren't the type to be motivated by a desire to help others, the DM can use horrific events directed at the PCs themselves to encourage them to take certain actions. If a rash of murders has decimated the organization to which they belong, or their names have been left clawed into the stones above recently exhumed graves, simple self-interest should motivate them to find out what the hell's going on.

Humbling the Players: Let's be honest. Sometimes, power goes to the heads of even the best players. The PCs are the center of attention and, in higher-level campaigns, possibly among the most powerful people in the campaign world. On occasion, then, it's useful for the DM to remind them that not every challenge is easily overcome, and not even they are mighty enough to thwart all evil all the time. While the DM can accomplish this through such simple means as throwing ever tougher monsters at them—the tarrasque has to be good for *something*, and the notion of an unbeatable beast is scary enough in its own right—it can be far more satisfying to pit them against a weaker, or even mundane, opponent. Even a simple lunatic with a knife is frightening if the players haven't a clue what he is and know him only by the trail of mutilated bodies he's left behind—a trail leading directly into the neighborhood where the PCs' closest ally dwells. The need to methodically follow a trail and separate false leads from true, yet find yourself unable to stop or even identify the perpetrator as he continues to maim and kill, is truly a humbling (if frustrating) experience.

And that is exactly why DMs should be careful not to overuse this technique. Frustration—when brief, and balanced by a great sense of accomplishment after the evil force is finally vanquished—is a powerful motivator. Let it drag on for too long, however, and it diminishes the players' enjoyment of the game. Many people play D&D precisely because they like to feel powerful. Even players not primarily concerned with accomplishment aren't likely to enjoy a game in which they are always one step behind. A DM should have a good working knowledge of the various personalities comprising his gaming group before making even the occasional adventure more than briefly frustrating.

Simple Change of Pace: The DM doesn't necessarily need a reason to add a horror adventure into the mix. Some games are dungeon crawls, some full of political intrigue, some mysteries, some intense roleplaying sessions. . . . Why shouldn't horror be part of the rotation as well? Unless the DM is doing a specifically themed campaign, variety keeps the game from getting stale. And given the vast numbers of horrific monsters intrinsic to Dungeons & Dragons, it actually seems unrealistic not to have adventurers run across the occasional horrific event.

DESIGNING A HORROR ADVENTURE

Putting together a horror adventure is, at its core, like putting together any other single story. The DM must determine a starting point (or variety of plot hooks), a general plot (sufficient to guide the NPCs and events, but not so ironclad as to make the PCs superfluous), and an anticipated end point (or at least a sense of what the consequences will be, based on how the players wind up concluding the scenario).

To make a horror adventure truly stand apart requires a certain sense of overall unity—not that every encounter and every aspect of the story have to fit together neatly, like children's blocks, but that the adventure as a whole has a thematic unity. The players should be able to look back and say, "We didn't see it at the time, but everything makes sense now that all is said and done." Furthermore, any horror adventure worthy of the name must have—well, horror. Throwing in tougher monsters and vats of blood is only the start. Bringing the players to a sense of true, shuddering horror requires stories and techniques designed from the ground up to evoke precisely that reaction.

MOOD

It's easier to maintain the horror of a story when you determine beforehand the specific mood you want the story to have. You don't have to write a treatise on the symbolism of your adventure or anything like that, but you ought to have some basic idea of the sort of horror you're trying to convey. A given tale might have more than one mood, of course, depending on the nature of the story you're telling.

The mood of the game is the general atmosphere you're trying to put across, not the specific plot. Not every event of the game needs to feed into this mood, but the majority of scenes and details should lean in this direction. A few specific examples follow, though this is by no means a comprehensive list.

Betrayal and Distrust: The heroes have no idea whom to trust. Old allies have turned on them, and it seems that the entire world is made up of a web of lies. (This mood often ties into the mood of confusion, discussed below.) With an experienced group of players, this might even involve betrayal by one or more of the PCs.

Claustrophobia: The PCs are trapped in some shape, form, or fashion—literally, such as being stuck in a confined space, particularly one that limits their actions and abilities, or metaphorically, such as being forced into a particular task or situation. Don't railroad your players by leading them into a situation in which they have very few options, none of them good. The tension might come from the PCs'

No way out!

Illus. by M. Phillippi

inability to bring all their talents to bear against oncoming threats, or from distaste for the activities the circumstances force them to take, or from their inability to escape some threat confined with them.

Confusion: The PCs have no real idea of what's going on. They cannot seem to find out why certain events are occurring, or what those events mean. Things do not appear to make sense, and people they know seem to act out of character. This mood is appropriate for a mystery or conspiracy-oriented plotline.

Desperation: The villains seem to be on the cusp of complete victory. Nothing the characters have done has worked, but they know of one possible hope, a single spark in a darkening world. Examples include a race against time, a series of difficult decisions, even a situation in which the PCs are forced to choose the lesser of two evils and act against their normal moral code.

Eeriness/Incongruity: There's something slightly wrong, a crawling sensation that lurks atop the spine and refuses to leave. The people in town seem never to smile. The wood is silent, with no sign of chirping or animal noises. The air feels alive—the calm before the storm. The PCs have no idea what's happening, but the off-kilter details feed a sense of creeping paranoia. This mood is useful as a buildup to something more overt, or to instill a false sense of danger that causes them to lash out inappropriately when confronted with someone entirely innocent.

Helplessness: The forces arrayed against the PCs seem utterly unstoppable, and the goal they seek appears unattainable. Every success turns into a failure; every answer raises more questions. This mood is appropriate primarily for shorter stories, or for a brief, brutal portion of a longer one, since the goal is to stun the characters; maintaining it too long breeds frustration in the players.

Internal Struggle: The PCs are faced with conflicting needs or desires throughout the story. This conflict can be as simple as putting personal gain over the needs of those around them, or as complex as a PC's falling in love with the priestess of an evil cult (or vice versa). Collaboration with the players to create appropriate PC backgrounds and goals is essential to make this mood work.

Isolation: The PCs are absolutely alone. They cannot call for help. They cannot restock their supplies. They have no one on whom they can call, no matter what they face, no matter what threat arises before them. PCs are pretty self-reliant, for the most part, so isolation isn't likely to scare them—at first. As their resources begin to dry up, however, and they can find no aid between encounters, they soon discover that even the smallest threats cannot be ignored when they have nowhere to run. This mood works very well in conjunction with claustrophobia.

Revulsion: PCs constantly confronted by monsters become inured to them over time, a situation you can set right with Things That Should Not Be. This mood might be extradimensional beings incomprehensible to mortal minds, or necromantic experiments gone horribly wrong, or whatever else you think might really get under your players' skin. Magic and the "unnatural" are a normal part of life in most fantasy worlds, but if you can find true oddities and abominations beyond the players' expectations, the reward in tension and terror will definitely be worth the effort.

Self-Loathing: The PCs themselves somehow become the source of evil or suffering in others. Perhaps they were tricked into committing some vile act, or some supernatural force (lycanthropy or *dominate person* or possession) drove them to it. The enemy within is often the most horrifying, particularly if circumstances are such that the players cannot be sure they will not do it again. This mood differs from internal struggle, above, in that the players are not conflicted; they know that what they did was wrong.

Shock: The horror of this mood comes primarily from surprise, shock, and gore. The mood is not a slow escalation but a sudden explosion as the PCs stumble into something they could never have imagined seeing, and would never want to. Shock works best when used to support one of the other options, rather than carrying a story itself.

Spiraling Despair: Everything is slowly but surely falling apart, on either a personal or setting-wide level. Living conditions worsen, loved ones find themselves in straitened circumstances, war ramps up between nations. And nothing the PCs do—at least not initially—seems to be able to stop it. This sort of story should become less and less pleasant (for the characters, not the players) as time passes and frequently leads to one of the other moods presented here.

Violence: Everything seems to result in bloodshed. Diplomacy breaks down. Wars erupt. Horrible creatures stalk the streets, slaying all they come across until they are slain in turn. The PCs might even be forced to shed innocent blood in self-defense, if they are blamed for ongoing crimes or faced with mystically controlled crowds. This is a good mood to intertwine with others, or for players who want a taste of horror without dramatically changing playing styles.

Weight of Suspicion: The heroes find themselves on the wrong end of the law, on the bad side of the Church or the Crown, or facing down an angry mob. Everywhere they turn they find enemies, not because they are surrounded by evil, but because they are seen as evil themselves. Can they survive without becoming exactly what they're accused of being? And how do you fight an entire community?

SETTING

The setting, like the mood, characters, and plot, plays a large part in evoking an atmosphere of dread. The DM's choice of setting both indicates and enhances the type of horror he wishes to portray. An adventure set in an old, drafty castle during a lightning storm certainly implies and encourages a different sort of unease than a sudden spilling of blood in the midst of a sunny sylvan hamlet.

When deciding on the setting for a horror adventure, consider the following salient points.

Bring the Heroes to the Story, or the Story to the Heroes? Putting the PCs in an unfamiliar environment helps to build tension. The characters are strangers in a strange land, with nobody on whom to call. They have little knowledge of local customs, laws, or lurking threats. People are, by nature, most comfortable in areas they know well, so removing that familiarity removes that cushion of comfort. Additionally, bringing the PCs to exotic locations enables the DM to introduce elements unavailable in more familiar grounds—environmental hazards for which the heroes are unprepared, monsters the likes of which they have never seen, and so on. Perhaps the heroes are stuck on an enormous ship, being stalked by an undead or undersea horror even as the vessel is slowly sinking into the ocean. Maybe they're in an abnormally shaped mountain range that could not exist without magic, wherein every surface is steep, and outcroppings protrude at impossible angles.

On the other hand, the corruption of the familiar can bring about a shatteringly horrific experience. An evil hidden in the midst of an area the players consider safe is the most dangerous of all, because it is totally unexpected. The heroes might initially feel they have the home field

HORROR-ORIENTED SETTINGS

Chapter 3 discusses, in some detail, designing settings specifically for horror campaigns, environments in which almost every imaginable story is going to include at least a few horrific elements. While these settings are well suited to horror adventures that are part of larger horror campaigns, they are not usually appropriate to a horror adventure that occurs in a standard campaign.

Quite simply, most horror-specific settings are broad enough to contain more than a single adventure. PCs in such realms should usually encounter multiple horrific plots and villains, rather than just one. For a horror adventure that is meant solely as a break between other types of stories, it is far better to work the horror into a more mundane (or apparently mundane) setting. In the span of a single adventure, it is easier to explain the PCs entering and leaving a haunted castle, or confronting a possessed murderer hiding among the clergy, than it is to have them locate, enter, adventure through, and leave an entire nation of undead-haunted moors.

Exceptions exist, of course. Maybe the PCs are traveling cross-country, and pass through a small kingdom of demon-worshipers. Maybe they are plane-hoppers who land briefly in a domain of intrinsic evil. Perhaps they simply wake up to discover themselves in a blasted wasteland occupied by aberrationlike mutations of all they used to know and must find a quick means of escape before they, too, begin to warp under the effects of taint. For the most part, however, a stand-alone horror tale should occur within a setting that, except for the horror elements, resembles a standard location. Reserve the truly twisted and abnormal realms for long-term, campaign-length horror.

advantage in familiar terrain: They know all the good hiding places and have easy access to aid and information. But by the same token, they have plenty of loved ones, friends, and allies who are suddenly in danger. They also have more to lose—they cannot simply turn tail and run if the going gets too tough. This fact can make the horror more immediate than an adventure that occurs in an exotic setting, because the game itself feels more real. The more clearly a player can picture the environment, the harder the horror hits home. And in most cases, it's easier to envision a village or city than some foreign or even alien landscape.

It's important for a DM not to overuse the concept of exotic settings for horror adventures. If he only has one such adventure in an otherwise traditional campaign, an alien or foreign setting is just fine. If he intends to include multiple horror sessions scattered throughout the campaign, most of them should probably take place in more mundane settings, with the exotic environments used only to add spice. Otherwise, the players come to expect and prepare for horrific plots if they always find themselves in odd locations before one occurs, whereas fear is more potent when the players have no time to prepare for it. Any horror the DM concocts will have less impact if the players think of it as something that only happens to them outside the normal confines of the campaign. Enough horror occurs in the real world; surely any campaign has villains and monsters that can wreak their terror in even the most pristine and innocent regions of the setting.

Mix and Match Environmental Elements: Chapter 1 offers suggestions on using the environment to create a sense of impending horror, with supply shortages, increasing weather hazards, and the like. Consider using a combination of these elements when running a horror adventure. A sense of urgency can develop when a series of environmental circumstances lead into or feed off one another. For instance, geographical isolation can be accompanied by extreme weather, which can lead to growing shortages of food and fuel. Alternatively, the PCs might be stalked by a foe they are just barely strong enough to fend off. Unfortunately, their food and water grow scarce as they try to find their way back to civilization. Each time they are attacked, they are just a bit hungrier, a bit more tired (and thus a bit weaker), and a little lower on expendable magic than the previous time. The precarious balance is slowly tilted out of their favor; if they cannot find some way to rest, replenish their supplies, or escape their pursuer(s), they will soon be unable to ward off their enemy at all.

How Do the Plot and the Adversaries Mesh with the Environment? It can seem obvious to experienced DMs, but it's still worth pointing out: The setting must enhance, or at least not interfere with, the plot of the adventure. If a story revolves around figuring out which member of a community is secretly a wererat who has been killing local leaders, the community must be large enough to present a reasonable range of suspects. If an adventure involves the discovery of a new trap-filled tomb, haunted by the spirits of an ancient race who died there ten thousand years ago, it most likely should be pretty distant from the nearest major community, or else someone's going to wonder why it wasn't unearthed before now. If part of an adventure's tension comes from the PCs slowly running out of food in the dead of winter, it obviously should not be set so close to civilization that the PCs can just dash back and buy more rations. (Unless, of course, the entire region is in the grip of famine, which is a whole different sort of alteration to the setting, but no less appropriate.)

See Chapter 3: A Horror Campaign for more on the use of setting in a horror story.

PLOT AND STORY

It's practically impossible to have a horror adventure without some element of story involved. It doesn't matter how terrible a villain might hypothetically be if he doesn't *do* anything; it doesn't matter how much a setting contributes to the mood if the PCs have no reason to be there.

Some DMs prefer not to create overarching stories, instead simply presenting the PCs with the environment and allowing them to do as they will. This is certainly a viable style of gaming, but it's perhaps less appropriate to horror games, simply because the what and why of horror are just as important as the who, how, and where. Even DMs who normally run freeform games should strongly consider developing a general storyline for their horror adventures, even if it's only a bit more in-depth than what they're accustomed to.

At the same time, it's very easy—especially in a horror game—for the DM to go too far, and become too rigid with his plot. Horror might be at least partly about fear and helplessness, but that does not mean that your players should be helpless to steer the game. Player choice must be as viable and important here as it is in any other game; if the DM designs a story so rigidly that the PCs can do nothing but follow from point A to B to C, without changing anything with their decisions, they might as well be reading a book or watching television. It's a balancing act between the two extremes, and it takes practice and a working knowledge of a particular group's preferences to get it exactly right.

The best way to design a plot in a horror adventure (and many other types of adventure, for that matter) is for the DM to know the objectives and methods of the villains and NPCs fairly well, set them in motion, and determine how they will turn out if the PCs do not interfere. If he has a solid grasp on these factors, then it's a simple matter to extrapolate what happens next after the presence of the PCs has thrown the original scheme to hell and gone. For instance, the DM has determined that a vampire lord seeks to kill a particular member of a small city's populace, because prophecy claims this person's daughter will eventually destroy the undead noble. He is making use of the city's thieves guild to find him, masquerading as a mortal who seeks him as part of a kidnapping scheme, whose profits he will share with the guild. If they are not stopped by outside factors (namely, the PCs), they will eventually succeed in locating him and turn him over to the vampire, who will doubtless slay him immediately.

With this information, the DM is equipped to decide what happens after the PCs interfere. If they defeat or slay members of the guild, the organization will come after them, both to complete their original assignment

and for revenge. If the PCs expose their employer's true nature to the guild, will they remove themselves from the affair? Continue to serve the vampire? Turn on him? The DM should decide ahead of time what the Guildmaster is like, and therefore how he is likely to react to such circumstances. If the PCs flee with the intended victim, they might escape the guild, but the vampire lord will follow. Can the PCs confront the vampire lord directly? Have they a chance of slaying him, or even of survival? Can they at least wound him enough to force him to retreat, giving them opportunity to hide the woman elsewhere? Clearly, while the DM has a plotline planned for the story, the actions of the PCs definitely have an impact on where it goes.

Perhaps most important, the DM must be willing to let the story take its course, even if the PCs do something completely unexpected or succeed in defeating a foe he never thought they could. It can be hard for a DM to let go of a favored plot, but better that than to make the players feel useless. Besides, it's always possible to salvage a new plot from the ashes of the old. Given the above example, suppose the PCs do slay the vampire lord. Is the story over? Well, yes—for now. But the vampire lord might have had minions, or allies, and since it's now clear the prophecy regarding the woman's child didn't refer to the vampire lord himself—after all, it was the PCs who killed him—maybe it referred to one of them instead? Are they willing to wait around and find out?

(Of course, it's possible the prophecy did refer to that child. After all, it was because of him—even though he has not yet been conceived, let alone born—that the vampire lord encountered the PCs in the first place.)

Mystery in a Horror Adventure

Mystery and horror go together so perfectly that some people automatically associate the two. Both are based on the unknown, on hidden danger and a desperate struggle to snatch victory from overwhelming odds. Mystery stories can be difficult to tell in the context of a D&D game, but they certainly aren't impossible. Authors have written entire books on how to craft a good mystery, something well beyond the scope of *Heroes of Horror*. The following pointers should, however, form a sufficient foundation to get you started in the right direction.

First, when planning your game and dropping hints and clues during it, it is always better to include too many clues than to include too few. As the DM, you have the advantage of seeing the big picture; your players do not. It might seem a bit unrealistic for a masterful, intelligent villain to leave hints as to his presence, identity, and plans all over the place. Could he really have been foolish enough to allow that child begging on the street corner to have witnessed his crime, *and* to leave a scrap of paper imprinted with his employer's symbol unburned beside the fireplace, *and* to be the only person in town to have purchased that one vital ingredient for the incantation he's planning to cast? Any one of those is a bad mistake. All three, and your villain might seem more criminally stupid than criminal.

Remember, however, that your players aren't likely to see all these hints. As soon as they find one trail of breadcrumbs that leads to your villain, they're likely to follow it. They might never know that you planted other trails. If you only have one string of clues to the solution of your mystery, the players (and the plot) are in trouble if they miss it. If you have several, they might find the second even if they missed the first, or the third if they missed the second.

Along similar lines, conundrums and puzzles that are too easy are better than those that are too hard. If you've put together a finely crafted mystery, full of false leads and layers of conspiracy, you don't want your players stumbling across the one piece of information that cuts through the whole thing in a matter of minutes. Still, a game in which the players feel they are accomplishing nothing bogs down very quickly, and the frustration can reduce their desire to participate in a similar mystery in the future. It's better to make the clues a bit too obvious and let the story end too quickly than to make the clues too difficult and the story stretch too long. The players will feel a sense of accomplishment rather than resentment, and you can always make your next mystery harder.

Finally, too much of anything—including mystery—gets stale. Intersperse investigations and mysteries with more action-oriented or political stories. Bored players can bring down any game, of course, but mysteries are particularly vulnerable to player malaise. After all, if the players aren't into the story, they're likely to miss even the most blatant clues, thus slowing the game down even further. Use other sorts of games between mysteries, and be sure to include

BAITING THE HOOK

Nothing ruins a good story like having the PCs just walk away from it, and this is especially true of a horror adventure, into which the DM is likely to have put a great deal of thought and preparation. In many groups, this isn't a problem; the players are eager to leap into whatever the DM has planned. Some, however, require a bit more encouragement to involve themselves in dangerous or frightening situations. As mentioned above, having the horror strike home—victimizing the PCs' closest allies, for instance—should encourage even the most reluctant character to get involved. Alternatively, the DM might offer a prize too great to ignore—perhaps an item the PCs have sought since the start of the campaign. Sometimes the horror comes to the PCs. If they are being stalked through a haunted foundry or trapped on a ship, they cannot simply walk away; in fact, escape might be the greatest prize they can hope to win.

One additional type of hook that is particularly appropriate to the horror genre involves consequences of the PCs' own actions. Perhaps the monster they face here is the ghost of someone they allowed to die years ago, or a demon they failed to fully destroy. If the characters are not all good-aligned, the individual seeking vengeance or justice against them might even be justified in his vendetta, even if he is choosing to take it out on the PCs' loved ones rather than on the party members directly. Most players will not be able to walk away from such a plot hook, precisely because it involves their own actions—and even if they try, it's likely to follow them.

action even in the middle of a mystery game. Perhaps the villain's minions attempt to stop the PCs' investigations with a good old-fashioned smackdown, or an old enemy takes advantage of their distraction to attack them (or their loved ones). Whatever the case, do not worry about sidetracking the mystery with scenes of combat or other action. You can always steer the players back to the main plot, and they'll be all the more ready for it after a brief action-packed respite.

VILLAINS IN A HORROR GAME

While the PCs are the central characters of any roleplaying game, the villains are arguably almost as important, especially in a horror game. Random monsters, no matter how dangerous or grotesque, are rarely as powerful or memorable as adversaries with well-planned goals or burning motives. With sufficient planning and detail, a single villain can drive an entire campaign.

Types of Villains

Villains in horror stories can generally be categorized into several broad types. Some villains will not fit easily into a category, some will fit more than one, and most have at least a few traits that don't fit a specific category. Nevertheless, the following are useful generalizations; deciding which one suits the game you wish to run is the first step in developing an appropriate and memorable adversary for your PCs.

The Hidden Danger: Perhaps the most common trope of horror, this villain is nearly impossible to detect. He kills from concealment and engenders mistrust and suspicion among all who would thwart him. In D&D, this is the archetype of the doppelganger, the werewolf, the mystically disguised assassin, the corrupt noble, or the cannibalistic witch masquerading as a kindly little old lady. This category also includes the subtype of villains who aren't even aware of their own evil, such as the victims of demonic or ghostly possession or, in some instances, the aforementioned lycanthrope. This archetype is particularly appropriate for games with moods of betrayal and distrust, confusion, shock, or the weight of suspicion (see Mood, page 22).

The Overt Threat: The opposite of the previous archetype, this is the villain that stands out from the crowd, that doesn't care (or isn't capable of caring) who notices it. Its arrogance might be due to sheer power and confidence, arrogance, lack of intelligence, insanity, or a simple lack of interest in its effect on others. Perhaps the villain holds a position of authority and doesn't need to hide. Many of the relatively large creatures of D&D, such as giants or most dragons, fit into the overt category. So do many undead, dictatorial kings, church inquisitors, evil necromancers sequestered in their towers, most bestial humanoids (such as goblins or orcs), golems, and the utterly mad. This villain type is a particularly appropriate choice for games with moods of claustrophobia, desperation, helplessness, isolation, revulsion, or violence (see Mood, page 22).

The Poor Fool in Over His Head: Sometimes, the greatest of horrors are unleashed by the most ignorant or the most well-meaning people—individuals who have dabbled in powers beyond their comprehension, or whose hubris has led them to believe they can tame the forces of the world itself. In most cases, it is the result of the individual's actions that is evil, rather than the individual himself. But when he refuses to stop against all advice, he might become a true villain in his own right. This category includes the cultist who summons his demonic lord without taking the proper precautions to contain it, the sorcerer who attempts to cast a complex ritual for which he is not prepared, the petitioner who feels he can get the better of a devil or an evil god in a bargain, the summoner who makes a careless wish of an efreeti, or the classic Frankenstein archetype of the man who allows his obsessive need to complete some task to blind him to the repercussions. This villain is appropriate for games with moods of confusion, eeriness/incongruity, internal struggle, self-loathing, or the weight of suspicion (see Mood, page 22). These last three are particularly appropriate if it's one of the PCs who made the mistake that unleashed the horror.

The Normal Person: Given the plethora of supernatural horrors D&D has to offer, it's hard to consider an average person to be all that scary. Then again, perhaps it is because the game provides so many truly horrific creatures as points of comparison that terrible acts committed by normal people truly strike home. As evidenced in the real world, a brutal crime can become even more horrible when the perpetrator appeared to be "one of us." In a D&D campaign, a so-called normal person might still have access to spells or other potent abilities. For advice on using members of adventuring classes as villains, see page 30. As a particular shock to your players, consider making a truly average person—a commoner or expert—your perpetrator.

Given the abilities available to most PCs, a commoner is never going to be particularly frightening as an opponent in face-to-face combat. Don't try to make him so. Instead, play up the horror of his actions, and the investigation required to figure out who he is. Not every mystery must end with a terrible battle. If the PCs follow a trail of obscure clues and mutilated bodies to a house filled with furniture made of corpses, only to discover the killer is the fellow they met fixing the roof on the general store, they're going to realize to the core of their being that anyone is capable of the most horrific acts. (Take a few moments to research real-world serial killer Ed Gein, for example. That alone should suggest the sort of over-the-top horrors of which a "normal" man is capable.) Since the PCs will probably miss what's right under their eyes as they search for a more traditional D&D villain, confusion is an appropriate mood here (see page 23).

The Decoy: This is a bait-and-switch combination of the other techniques, in which one villain or type of villain appears to be another. This tactic can be extremely effective if used sparingly, either to give the PCs one last shock or puzzle or to change the course of a plotline just as the players feel they've figured it out. Decoy examples include the evil elf necromancer who is secretly a polymorphed blue dragon, a serial killer who seems to slay at random but is actually performing a summoning rite to call his diabolic patron, the rampaging giant possessed by an even more malevolent entity, the "demons" who are actually illusionist kobolds in disguise. Not every decoy is a more powerful being cloaked in a weaker one; it can

easily work the other way around. Decoys and misdirection can add to the atmosphere of stories that play up confusion, eeriness/incongruity, and shock. They also work when combining a number of moods in bizarre ways, as one mood gives way to another with the discovery of each deception.

The Treasonous Loved One: The villain of the story stands revealed—a friend, relative, or lover of one of the PCs. How did the NPC's evil nature come to be? He could be possessed or otherwise controlled by an outside power. He could have been corrupted and turned to evil. He might have embraced taint or been transformed into a vampire. Perhaps he has always been evil and has been deceiving the heroes all along. Whatever the case, this discovery has a personal impact beyond that of the standard hidden danger.

This sort of villain can do substantial damage to the PCs both physically and psychologically. He knows their secrets and their vulnerabilities. He could besmirch their reputation with a few choice words in the right NPC's ear or with public revelation of their weaknesses. Yet he was once someone they deeply cared about, someone to whom they owed much—creating quite a quandary for the characters regarding how to deal with the threat. Betrayal and distrust is clearly the primary mood of such a story, but any or all of the other moods are appropriate as well.

The Evil PC: Recommended only for groups of players who are truly comfortable with one another, who trust the DM, and who are experienced roleplayers, this can be the most shocking and unexpected twist of an entire campaign. In this variation, the villain is none other than one of the PCs! Perhaps he has been possessed, or replaced by an evil duplicate (see The Evil Duplicate Ploy, page 34). Even more disturbing, however, is the notion of a PC who has been evil all along, who has been deceiving the other characters and working against them from the start of the story. While an evil duplicate of a PC can work with or without the knowledge of the player in question, the character who was evil from the start requires player–DM cooperation. Only make use of this technique in groups who aren't going to take the deception personally. It's usually a good idea, once the deception is finally known, to let the other characters mete out justice to (or take vengeance on) the traitor; this helps to allay any hard feelings. Of course, it need not be immediate justice, and the DM might decide to keep the character around as an NPC villain even after he's been discovered. The villain is going to have substantial knowledge of the PCs' movements and weaknesses, making betrayal and distrust an ideal mood choice.

If you're planning this sort of twist, bear in mind that the rest of the characters might discover the traitor before you anticipate. Whether because of the various spells and abilities designed to detect evil or deception, or sheer random luck, the traitor might be caught passing information to others or simply revealed for the nasty person he is. Using the optional behavorial alignment rules presented on page 76 mitigates the chance of such discovery to an extent, but you should always have a contingency plan for if—or perhaps when—the discovery occurs. Except under truly bizarre circumstances, you should not violate the spirit of the rules in order to keep this secret hidden. When the other players do finally learn that their compatriot betrayed them, they are likely to take it better if they feel the player of the evil character and the DM both played by the rules. Those who feel they should have known and were cheated out of a chance to make the discovery might not react well, and with good reason.

Intelligent Villains

Unless a villain or monster you're using is specifically unintelligent, you should always have your adversaries act in a creative, intelligent manner. Nothing creates a sense of fear and paranoia in players more than the realization that the villain they are facing is willing and able to take advantage of their weaknesses. Have the villain strike while the heroes are distracted with another task. Target their loved ones. Take hostages. Frame the PCs. Attack them with methods they are less able to defend against (such as using poisons against casters and other low-Fortitude types, and charms against fighters). Don't allow the villain to make use of knowledge he couldn't possibly have, but even adversaries of average intelligence can make logical deductions based on player actions and appearances. In some games, the DM might hesitate to use a monster's or NPC's full arsenal of capabilities, focused where they'll do the most harm; it's somehow considered unfair to take advantage of PC weaknesses. Such a concern is inappropriate for a horror game. Your villains are not (or should not be) invulnerable. They have weak points the PCs can attack. Do not be afraid to turn the tables.

Unstoppable Villains

The adversary who seems unstoppable is a mainstay of horror tales. We've all seen the movie in which the villain keeps getting back up, no matter how often or severely he's been killed. Powerful evil wizards (evil geniuses, every one of them) seem always to be one step ahead of the heroes' plans, countering their tactics before they've even fully formed them. Not all villains share this trait, of course, but those that do are among the scariest.

The DM must walk a fine line: You want to make the PCs (or even the players) afraid, but you don't want them giving up in frustration. It's okay to make your villains seem invulnerable, but they should always have at least one exploitable weakness, and you should drop sufficient clues for your PCs to eventually find it. The ghost that cannot be slain by any physical means was killed when he was a living boy and can be burned by the tears of a child. The illithid sorcerer can anticipate almost any action the PCs take, but because he's completely incapable of self-sacrifice, he never considers that the heroes might be willing to engage in almost certain suicide to thwart his plans. To pull two examples from the same series of classic literature: The dragon Smaug could only be slain by penetrating the one weak spot in his otherwise impenetrable armored hide; and the armies of men and elves could never have defeated Sauron directly—but because he could not even conceive of someone destroying a source of power as great as the One Ring, he doesn't guard thoroughly against the hobbits' attempts to do so.

Damage reduction and regeneration are examples of abilities that can make monsters difficult to defeat. A PC without silvered weaponry will find it difficult to kill a werewolf; trolls are nasty when fire and acid are nowhere to be found; and a group without magic and holy weapons is in great trouble when faced with a powerful demon. Consider changing a particular creature's damage reduction or regeneration ability (a vampire with damage reduction effective against cold iron rather than silver, for example), requiring the PCs to determine its weaknesses before they dare take it on (see Finding the Achilles' Heel, page 34).

On occasion, a villain can be truly invulnerable to harm. In none of H. P. Lovecraft's Mythos stories, for instance, does the protagonist have any true hope of defeating one of the Old Ones. Even in such a case, however, a road to accomplishment should exist for the PCs. They might not be able to slay the awakening evil deity, but perhaps they can disrupt the ritual calling it and send it back to slumber. At the very least, perhaps they can escape the creature's environs, surviving to fight another day. Unstoppable need not mean undefeatable, and the heroes should always have at least a chance of coming out even, if not ahead.

Motive

How do you construct a believable, memorable villain? What makes a villain horrific is the combination of his motives, his goals, and his means of carrying out those goals.

Motive is the need or desire that causes a person to take action. Most villains don't do evil for the sake of doing evil (except for monstrous races that are usually or always evil-aligned). Like everyone, villains always feel that they have something to gain or that they are striving for what they consider to be a greater good. In some cases, commonly referred to as tragic villains, circumstances beyond their control have driven them to evil. Their actions are no more excusable than those of any other villain, but perhaps they are more easily understood.

The following list of possible motivations is far from comprehensive but should provide a strong starting point.

Enrichment: One of the simplest motives, this is nothing more than the desire for personal gain. The common thief is often spurred by a desire for treasure, but so are many dragons or invading armies willing to slay hundreds and level towns to gain the wealth within.

Freedom: The desire to be free of an oppressive government or ruler is a justifiable one, and those who struggle against such regimes are often considered heroic. If the means by which they fight grow too violent or indiscriminate, or if someone fights for freedom from lawful imprisonment, they become rather less admirable. The terrorist who targets the civilians living under the government he wishes to overthrow, or the prisoner who slaughters guards and bystanders alike in his quest to escape punishment for his crimes, is ostensibly seeking freedom.

Hatred: Be it racial, religious, or cultural, hatred and prejudice motivate a substantial number of villains in fiction and in the real world as well. Everyone from the thug who beats halflings to death for no other reason than that they're halflings to the dictator who enslaves or slaughters all of a specific faith within his borders falls into this category. Hatred can spring from cultural or inherited prejudice or come from no apparent source at all, but it's often inspired by other motivations, such as loss, revenge, or the desire for social change. It often overlaps with the desire for purification (see below).

Illness: Plague and the fear of contamination have inspired all manner of horrific acts. To avoid contagion, otherwise good-hearted people will turn away from those who suffer, burn them to ash in their own homes, imprison (quarantine) them in isolated camps. Those infected might also commit horrific acts in a search for a cure, or in the madness brought by the raging fevers. The simple act of seeking human contact can spread the plague to others, resulting in more suffering. Illness rarely stands on its own as a motive, but often inspires others, such as hatred and madness.

Justice: The need to redress past wrongs leads obsessed individuals to take inappropriate actions. A man hunting for the criminals who murdered his wife, with violence on his agenda, is something most people can understand, if not support. When he grows so obsessed with his search that he's willing to kill anyone who stands in his way, or refuses to consider his actions' consequences for others, he crosses the line into villainy. Justice is subtly different from revenge as a motive (see below), but the one often leads to the other.

Loss and Desperation: Even the best of people can be driven to commit horrors under the proper circumstances. If the life of a loved one is at stake, for instance, they might take any actions necessary to protect it. Consider a noble lord whose daughter has taken ill with a plague that seems to resist magical cures. When he leaves home to quest for the cure, he is heroic. When he determines that he will acquire the cure no matter the cost, even taking it from the hands of those who are equally sick, or slaying others who seek it lest they find it first, he becomes a villain. Tragic, yes, but a villain nonetheless. Or consider the young apprentice wizard learning magic from his father, whose soul is eventually claimed by the demon lord with whom he dealt many years ago. If the apprentice agrees to sacrifice others to the demon in exchange for his father's return, or to let loose the demon on the Material Plane, his actions are villainous no matter how well intended.

Madness: Some villains have no easily understood motives. They are driven by madness, an insanity incomprehensible to those whose minds are relatively whole. Many serial killers fall into this category. Madness frequently results from illness or loss and desperation.

Order: The villain seeks to bestow order on what he views as a chaotic world or society. He believes he has the best interests of the people at heart, that all the death and pain he causes now will be worth it when he rules. The vigilante who slaughters even the most minor of lawbreakers and the tyrant usurper who imprisons any who would dare speak against him might both be motivated by a need to impose order.

Personal Power: Sometimes the villain seeking to rule over others is not driven by a desire to make the world a better place or a need for order. Sometimes he's just power-hungry. Personal power is a prime motivator for many nobles

and politicians; they seek to exalt themselves and rule over others, and they care nothing about whom they must step on to reach that eminence, nor who suffers under their rule once they achieve it. The second-born prince who schemes to murder his brother and ascend the throne, the doppelganger who wishes to replace the mayor in order to control the city, the king who invades other nations for no better reason than that he seeks to expand his own kingdom's borders: All fall into this category.

Possession: Villains might not be evil of their own accord. Someone possessed by a demon or ghost or mentally controlled (such as with a *dominate* spell) is hardly responsible for his own actions, yet he still can be the primary villain of a game or even a campaign.

Purification: A close cousin to hatred, this is the motive when someone believes that a specific group—be it a race, religion, gender, or even profession—is responsible for corrupting society. The desire for purification often motivates ethnic cleansing or religious persecution. It could be argued that so-called "purification" is not so much related to hatred as a subcategory of it.

Revenge: A step down from justice as a motive, revenge refers to those villains who seek to redress a past wrong against themselves or others but are not particularly selective regarding whom they target for their vengeance. The angry ghost that lashes out at every living being in retribution for its murder, the king who sends his army to invade a nation because a citizen of that nation tried to kill him, or the war lock who curses the entire family of the priest who ordered him burned at the stake are all examples of villains with revenge as their motive.

Self-Gratification: One of the most primal villainous motives, this is nothing more than the fulfillment of some personal desire. The addict who commits violent crimes to attain his drug of choice, the rapist (whether he seeks sexual release or feelings of power and dominance), and the hot-tempered killer who slays out of rage and frustration are all examples of self-gratification.

Social Change: Some individuals are willing to turn to violence in an effort to change the society around them. While this might be justifiable under certain circumstances, it becomes inarguably villainous when innocents suffer for their actions. The insurrectionists who target anyone who lives under or supports the current system, and the government that uses violence to put down those who seek change, are both motivated by social change. Though one seeks to cause it and the other to halt it, both are equally villainous in their methods.

Survival: Even individuals motivated by little more than survival can become horrific villains under the proper circumstances. As mentioned under illness, people will go to truly unpleasant lengths to avoid contagion. If all the people of a community believe that a certain man is responsible for a rash of crimes, he might feel compelled—even if innocent—to kill everyone who comes across him, lest they report his location to the growing mob. One could even argue that certain monsters, such as vampires, have no choice but to slay others in order to survive.

Zealotry/Fanaticism: One of the most common justi-fi cations for villainy is love of, or orders from, a higher power. Whether it's a nation, a church, a family, an organization, a philosophy, or a deity, the individual strives to serve and protect the object of his devotion at the expense of all others. The patriot who sees foreign spies everywhere and commits crimes against foreigners, the religious zealot who converts "heathens" by the sword, and the church launching an inquisition against members of other faiths (or indeed its own) are all examples of zealotry or fanaticism.

Adventuring Classes as Villains

Horror villains need not be monsters or inhuman fiends. Humans, elves, dwarves, halflings, and any other humanoids can be villains, with the proper motivations and actions. Presented here are a few suggestions for motives or plot hooks for villains in each of the core adventuring classes.

Barbarian: A barbarian chieftain seeks to destroy any signs of civilization (farms, villages, cities) anywhere near his territory, believing organized society to be inherently corrupt. The rage ability of a particular barbarian comes from a burning internal anger and madness, leading him to lash out with lethal violence at any slight (or even imagined) offense. An outsider new to the city is enticed by the luxuries of civilization and seeks to gain immediate power and wealth by any means necessary.

Bard: A bard is using his magic to seduce entire crowds into turning over their wealth, their possessions, and even their daughters. A criminally minded bard uses *charm* spells and bardic knowledge to learn the secrets of powerful individuals and then blackmails them into doing his bidding. A research bard is delving up long-hidden lore and selling it to powerful and evil wizards. A jealous performer is slitting the throats of all the other singers in town.

Cleric: The cleric of an evil power is kidnapping the poor off the streets for hideous sacrifices. A high-ranking cleric of a good church instigates an inquisition against nonbelievers. (This situation works best in a world where the alignment of the cleric is not tied to that of the god, and a cleric can commit evil acts while believing he serves a greater good. The Eberron setting is an example of this way of handling alignments.) A cleric is animating a community's dead and using them to police the area, keeping law and order at the expense of the natural order and the freedom of the townsfolk.

Druid: A druid sets the animals of the wood to overrun a nearby town, which he believes threatens his territory, and slaughter all within. A mad druid declares that all animals should be raised to sentience; he casts *awaken* on a growing number of forest creatures, and teaches them to lie, murder, and even use magic to gain what they want. A feral druid sees no difference between human and animal, hunting the fringes of civilization and consuming all those he encounters.

Fighter: A mercenary general seeks to carve out a kingdom for himself, no matter how many communities he must overrun, enslave, or conscript to do so. A veteran of many wars cannot adjust to civilian life and goes on a killing spree. A fanatical worshiper of the god of war seeks to instigate conflict between nations by slaying the right people to inflame an ongoing border dispute.

A druid sets wild animals to overrun a nearby town

Illus. by W. Reynolds

Monk: An ancient order of monks, convinced of their spiritual superiority, enslave the village near their monastery. A powerful monk has hired his services out as a paid assassin, and local law enforcement is ill equipped to deal with his abilities, especially since many of his victims die days after contact with him (due to his quivering palm ability). A monk scholar believes the secrets of spiritual ascension and enlightenment are found in the physiological differences between humanoids and outsiders and is killing, examining, and dissecting many specimens of each in his studies.

Paladin: A great paladin undertakes a quest to purge the region of a particular type of lycanthrope terrorizing the area, not distinguishing between the newly infected who could still be saved and the long corrupted. The PCs have been well and thoroughly framed for some horrible crime, and their pursuers include well-intentioned paladins loyal to the local ruler or churches. A paladin has grown vicious and draconic in his interpretation of the law and is oppressing his people; he either does not realize or does not care that he is mere steps away from falling from his god's favor. (Perhaps an evil god or a demon lord is maintaining his powers without his awareness.)

Ranger: A ranger known for hunting dangerous game has decided his next challenge will be hunting select human targets (such as high-level adventurers); his killings appear to be random and without purpose. A woodsman seeking a reputation unleashes several captured wild animals and monsters on an unsuspecting populace, so he can hunt them down and become a local hero. A trio of evil rangers acting as snipers lay siege to an isolated small town; their goal is to eventually kill every last inhabitant.

Rogue: A small band of rogues has developed a unique method of running a murder-for-hire business: They engage in a series of murders that appear to be the work of a serial killer, hiding the specific victim amid the others so nobody realizes he was the intended target. A rogue robbing a wizard's home has stolen an ancient artifact in which a powerful entity is imprisoned; the rogue doesn't realize what he has and has begun to suffer nightmares as the demon takes control of his mind as the first step to winning free of its prison. A ruthless rogue is attempting to unite a city's criminal gangs into a unified guild, slaughtering anyone who stands in his way: rival criminal, innocent witness, or families of his foes.

Sorcerer: Persecuted as a child for his strange faculty with magic, a sorcerer has returned to his hometown to seek vengeance on the entire community. A sorcerer believes his mystical abilities come from an otherworldly ancestor—perhaps a fiend, he's not sure yet—and seeks not only to find that ancestor but to call it forth. Having decided that sorcerers, with their innate ability to cast spells, are a superior form of life, a powerful sorcerer and his allies set out to exterminate all sentient humanoids who are not sorcerers.

Wizard: An archmage has uncovered an ancient spellbook of incredible power, created by inhuman beings of the ancient world; as he learns the new spells within, he grows ever more powerful but also quite mad. A wizard's creations,

VAMPIRE LORD'S CASTLE
Strong wooden door
Strong wooden door (locked)
Secret door (Search DC 15)
Curtain
Trapdoor in floor
Trapdoor in ceiling
Stone pillar
Fireplace
Window
Suit of armor
Chair
Well
Barrels
Table
GROUND FLOOR
CRYPT
WELL SHAFT
HOLE IN CEILING (UNDER DAIS)
DAIS
TO SHORE
One square = 5 feet
1. Stone causeway
2. Main hall
3. Kitchen
4. Gardenshe
5. Servants' quarters
6. Pantry/storage
7. Trapdoor to crypt
8. Courtyard
9. Secret hallway
10. Tower study
11. Jeder's room
12. Upstairs hall
13. Sunset balcony
14. Bedroom
15. Bathroom
16. Spiral staircase
17. Parapet
18. Library
19. Study
20. Workroom
21. Stone bridge
22. Prison cells
23. Master bedroom
24. Bathroom
25. Gallery
26. South tower peak
27. North tower rooftop
28. Secret staircase (to area 10)
29. Hall with alcoves (from area 7)
30. Locked crypt
FOURTH FLOOR
THIRD FLOOR
SECOND FLOOR

both golems and undead, rampage through several border communities; is the wizard dead, has he lost control, or is this a deliberate attack? A wizard who strove for centuries to become immortal—perhaps through *wish* spells or by becoming an undead creature such as a lich—has decided he is tired of life and finally ready to die, but he will take every last person who ever wronged or offended him with him; he intends to find a way to obliterate every living thing, and perhaps even the world itself.

The Psionic Classes: A powerful psion has dominated the leaders of several communities and kingdoms, making herself secret master of an entire region. A psychic warrior takes advantage of his abilities to hire himself out as a wizard-killer and develops a taste for the murder of spellcasters. A sadistic soulknife destroys the mental abilities of witnesses planning to testify to his employer's crimes. A wilder believes that killing all sentient beings he encounters will silence the voices he has heard in his head since his powers first manifested.

TECHNIQUES OF TERROR

In addition to everything discussed so far, a great many tricks and techniques exist that the DM can use to increase the impact of a horror adventure. Each of these should be used sparingly, of course, but when presented at the right time, each can ratchet up the tension and the horror dramatically.

SPLITTING THE PARTY

Most DMs try to avoid splitting up the party, because it becomes difficult to keep the game flowing. On occasion, however, it's a viable option. Splitting the party means that no single portion of it is at full strength, and that PCs who find themselves in trouble have no idea if help is anywhere nearby.

You can handle splitting the party in two different ways, each of which has its own advantages in a horror game. One way is to continue to describe events with all the players present, alternating swiftly between groups. In combat, you might even run the entire encounter together, with everyone involved in the same initiative order, but the events occurring far from one another. If the situation does not involve battle, you might spend just a few minutes with one group, then cut to the second, then back to the first. This technique keeps all the players involved, and allows you to increase the tension by letting everyone know out of character what sorts of horrors beset their companions but leaving them no way to help them out in character. You might even end each scene on a cliffhanger, leaving one group in dire peril for a few moments while you shift to the other. The problem with this approach, however, is that you cannot hide events from the players, and this knowledge—even if known only out of character—can hinder your plans or weaken the tension. Use this approach, therefore, only if you doesn't need to keep any secrets from the players regarding the fate of their companions.

The other option is to physically separate the players into two or more groups. Take one group into another room, or ask the uninvolved players to step outside for a few minutes while you deal with the other group. The advantage to physically separating the players is that it keeps out-of-character knowledge from the players, making them wonder what's happening to their friends. It also allows you to execute maneuvers that require players be unaware of some crucial piece of information, such as replacing a missing companion with a doppelganger or shapeshifted fiend. The downside, of course, is that if the separation lasts for longer than a few minutes, then the uninvolved players can grow bored, and nothing kills any in-game mood—let alone something as fragile as horror—faster than boredom. You should use this technique sparingly, and preferably only when the uninvolved players have something else to occupy them (such as a snack run). Alternatively, you can set up a combat encounter to keep one group busy, and deputize a player whom you trust to do a fair and skillful job as "sub-DM" to take the other group of PCs and run that scene.

DON'T SHOW EVERYTHING

Despite the advice given earlier regarding detailed description, sometimes it's more effective not to reveal everything. No monster, however powerful, is as scary as knowing there's something picking your friends off from the shadows but not knowing what it is. Withholding a description works well when the PCs are either hunting something they know is in the area or are trapped in a confined space with something hunting them. In either case, the creature will eventually be revealed, if only for a final confrontation. Until then, consider having it strike only with surprise and then vanish into the darkness. Alternatively, perhaps it never reveals itself to PCs so long as they remain in a group, only closing when it can catch a character alone and be certain of killing him outright, leaving behind no witness. You could also throw several monsters at the PCs, none of which is the true threat.

THREATEN FRIENDS, ALLIES, AND LOVED ONES

Very little has a stronger emotional impact than threatening or harming those people the PCs love best. This event can be as simple as a character's family becoming endangered by encroaching monsters, or as sinister as a PC's lover being stalked by a deranged killer with hidden ties to his past. Whether the loved one is merely threatened, harmed, or killed is, of course, up to both the dictates of the plot and the actions of the characters.

For an added twist, perhaps the loved one in danger isn't another person, but a wizard's familiar or a paladin's mount. Is the animal in danger because it's a favored target of the still-unknown foe? Or because it's a familiar? Or because it's this specific character's familiar? This last is particularly brutal on characters, because it has the added element of guilt. The wizard can only wonder, did my familiar die because of something I did? The bond between master and companion is a strong one, as strong as any friendship between characters and NPCs (particularly in the case of the familiar, whose death can cause emotional trauma so severe that the caster loses experience points).

The machinations involving the PCs' nearest and dearest need not be limited to threatening their lives at the hands (or claws) of voracious killers. Consider the trauma engendered by a loved one's corruption by taint or slow descent into

madness. Such an event could play out over the course of a full-length adventure or might itself be the inspiration for the adventure. Can the heroes find and destroy the source of the taint before their friend is utterly lost to corruption? Can they cure, or at least contain, their maddened relative before he hurts herself or someone else? And are these just symptoms of a greater problem, a larger malady that threatens the entire community?

Even if your group's characters are loners who don't have families, friends, and lovers per se, the campaign should still be filled with NPCs who have aided them in the past or whom they rely upon from time to time. Threatening characters to whom the PCs are well disposed still has the impact of making them feel they are losing connections and allies, which can be enough to lay the groundwork for horror.

For more plot suggestions and techniques for using the characters' friends and loved ones, particularly in stories of longer duration than a single adventure, see Chapter 3: A Horror Campaign.

THE EVIL DUPLICATE PLOY

Many people who have played Dungeons & Dragons have come across some variant of the "PC is replaced by a doppelganger or other shapeshifter" plotline. It can be an effective story, particularly in a horror adventure. However, it poses its own set of problems.

The DM cannot just play the evil duplicate as another NPC and expect the PCs to go along with it. No matter how good the players are at roleplaying and separating in-character knowledge from out-of-character knowledge, the ploy fizzles when the players know the individual really isn't their friend—no matter how hard they try to pretend. This version of the evil duplicate technique simply isn't feasible when you wish to keep the PCs in the dark about their so-called companion.

This limitation doesn't render the technique useless. After all, the PCs aren't the only characters who can be fooled. A shapeshifter taking on the form of one of the PCs, then tormenting or killing other NPCs, is a fantastic way of landing the PCs into seriously hot water. When the watch is investigating them, and the village that once loved them is breaking out the rope, torches, and pitchforks, the heroes could find themselves in danger greater than any monster they've ever faced. Not only must they prove their innocence—despite numerous witnesses who saw with their own eyes the PC committing crimes—but they must try to avoid slaughtering innocent if misguided townsfolk in the process.

If you want to play a trickier game and actually fool the players as well, the best variant is to let the player of the replaced character in on the deal. The player continues to play the character but takes his cues from the DM, doing his best not to let on that anything is wrong. This can be a lot of fun, for the PCs in general when they finally learn the truth, and for the player in particular, who has the (presumably temporary) opportunity to play the bad guy.

This is still not a flawless technique, however. It's easy enough for the player to let something slip, either by accident or because he cannot help acting out of character to aid his companions. Even if the player is capable of handling it, it can be difficult for you to convey what you want him to do without the other players catching on. Nor can you necessarily reveal to the player the shapeshifter's true motives and methods, since this is information the player shouldn't have once the PCs recover their missing companion and he's playing his standard character again. This technique, then, is most useful when you want to keep the PCs fooled, but only in the relatively short term.

The final variation is the trickiest to pull off. It requires a group of experienced roleplayers, players who trust their DM implicitly, and a DM who knows not to abuse the power that trust brings. If you have all that, consider the possibility that one of the PCs has been replaced by an evil duplicate and that even the player of that character remains unaware of that fact. Something strange happens to the character; perhaps he goes off on his own briefly, or is targeted by a supernatural attack that he appears to shrug off. From that point on, however, the true character is elsewhere, and the evil duplicate is traveling with the PCs. Because the duplicate is extremely skilled, the rest of the PCs never receive any hints that anything is wrong. Only when they are asleep or otherwise occupied does the double fall under DM control and go about his business, perhaps sabotaging their efforts, passing information along to others, or even murdering the PCs' allies. Only if the other characters are fortunate enough to detect what is happening (perhaps through divination magic or exceptionally fortunate Spot checks), or when the PCs stumble across the true character in whatever prison or circumstances hold him, do any of them—including the player of the missing character—learn the truth.

As you might well imagine, some players will object to this technique, perhaps taking it personally that they were singled out without being told, or accusing you of abusing your power as DM. (And it's very easy for the DM to do just that; never use a false character to wreak such havoc on the PCs that they cannot recover from it, or to ruin someone's character concept.) To restate, this technique should only be used among experienced players who will enjoy the story and the discovery. Still, if the group is one in which such a technique will work, it is the best option for a truly long-term deception.

Incidentally, you should contrive some reason for the missing character to retain all the experience gained by his duplicate, even if he was really locked up in a dungeon, held in stasis, or even deceased. A player who has already shown sportsmanlike conduct in accepting the situation shouldn't be punished for it.

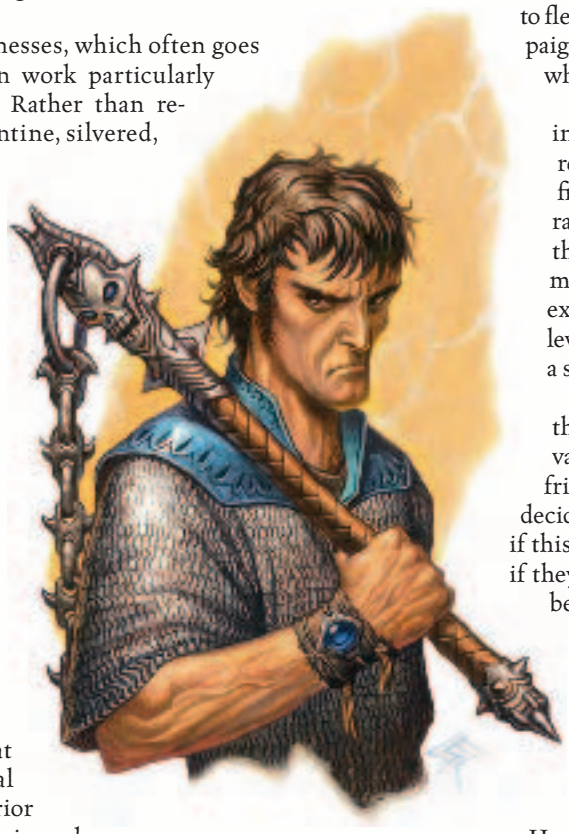
Finally, in order to make use of this last technique, consider having the malevolent entity possess the character rather than replace him. Characters frequently do not remember actions they might have taken while under someone (or something) else's control. This limited form of amnesia might help reconcile the player to the idea of remaining ignorant of his character's true state.

FINDING THE ACHILLES' HEEL

A race against time, trying to find the single means of destroying an apparently unkillable monster before it slays the PCs, slaughters a town full of innocents, or completes whatever its goal might be, can make for both thrilling

action and horrific tension. Obviously, not every monster should be resistant to damage, and most of those should follow the standard rules of damage reduction and energy resistance. Occasionally, however, a villain or monster might have only a single exploitable weakness. In these instances, the PCs cannot afford to fight directly; they must avoid or escape their adversary until they manage to unearth its weakness. A perfect example of this from the *Monster Manual* is the ghost, which reforms when destroyed unless whatever unfinished business ties it to the material world is finally resolved. The PCs must learn the ghost's identity and study its history in order to determine how to dispel it for good. Alternatively, unique monsters might have unique weaknesses. The demon Rastrael, for instance, might be immune to all weapons except those forged by servants of the angel Dalarael, the demon's half-brother.

The concept of unique weaknesses, which often goes hand-in-hand with horror, can work particularly well in low-magic campaigns. Rather than require magic weapons (or adamantine, silvered, good-aligned, what-have-you) to penetrate the DR of certain monsters, you might instead determine that every creature with damage reduction is vulnerable to a single material, or possibly even a single item, if only the PCs can learn what it is. For instance, certain aberrations might be vulnerable to gold, considered by many cultures to be the most pure of metals (even if too soft to make very good piercing or slashing weapons, it's amazingly effective as a bludgeoning weapon). A white dragon might be vulnerable to any blade forged in flames taken from a naturally occurring forest fire, due to the combined symbolism of heat and association with the natural world. A powerful undead warrior might be immune to most magic and even positive energy, but will crumble to dust if he is thrust through the heart with the same spear that sent him to his first death.



Samuel Amad

Stories of this sort require a combination of action and investigation, as the PCs attempt to ward off their enemy long enough to research his past and unearth the secrets of his eventual defeat.

INTRODUCING NEW ELEMENTS TO THE CAMPAIGN

Because mystery and fear of the unknown are major elements in horror stories, a horror adventure is the perfect opportunity to introduce a new hazard into a campaign—something the PCs have never seen before. Taint (see page 62) is a perfect example. The taint rules add depth to any campaign, particularly those with a horrific focus.

An adventure designed specifically around the PCs' first discovery of taint, perhaps as it threatens an area with which they are familiar, is an exciting way to introduce the concept. Madness is another possible example, as are any number of new monsters or magic items. The new campaign element need not even be the focus of the horror adventure; it can simply be something the PCs discover almost in passing, only to later learn that this minor detail actually possesses no small measure of importance.

SAMPLE ADVENTURE: FOR HATE'S SAKE

"For Hate's Sake" is a sample adventure designed to showcase some of what has been presented so far in *Heroes of Horror*. It is not a complete adventure; the DM needs to flesh out details to mesh with the campaign. Think of it as the foundation on which to construct a horrific story.

As written, "For Hate's Sake" is intended for a four-member party of roughly 8th level, but it can be modified for characters of higher level by raising Amad's level and either raising the bane wraith's Hit Dice or adding more bane wraiths or both. For less experienced parties, reduce Amad's level and replace the bane wraith with a standard wraith.

Note that "For Hate's Sake" assumes the PCs are already in the city of Adirvan, and that they have at least some friends and allies in the city. You must decide, as appropriate for your campaign, if this is a place the PCs visit regularly or if they are just passing through but have been present long enough to make a few contacts.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Samuel Amad, who grew up in the small city of Adirvan, was an exceptionally angry young man. He wasn't evil, nor was his temper so great that the community shunned him. Superbly skilled with his hands, he became known throughout his neighborhood as an expert carpenter and musician both. Yet anger burned always in his heart, even when he smiled on the outside, and he forever carried a grudge for any slight, no matter how minor. The barmaid who broke his heart last year; the professional rival who badmouthed Amad to clients and thus stole some of his potential carpentry jobs; even the child who bullied him when he was young, now grown up to be a fairly unsuccessful butcher—all these, and many more, laughed and pointed their way through Amad's mind, never offering him a moment's respite.

During his spare time, Amad traveled to the temples and libraries of the rich and powerful, researching religion and ancient lore. Precisely what he was seeking, even he

Illus. by S. Prescott

couldn't say. Some days, he thought he might be looking for a patron or some ancient secret that would grant him revenge on all who had wronged him. On others, he wished for nothing more than a deity who might grant him inner peace.

What he found was Cas, an obscure demigod, the lord of spite and the patron of all who cherish it in their hearts (see page 19 for more on Cas). And the instant Amad began his worship, Cas noticed him as well. Amad could see that his whims were, on a small but noticeable scale, becoming reality. Those on whom he wished ill fortune suffered a run of bad luck. He bumped into his carpentry rival in the market one day and the man collapsed, nearly dead, yet with no visible wounds to suggest Amad or anyone else had attacked him. Though he was not conscious of it, Amad had become a cleric of Cas, and his heartfelt desires were transformed into spells. Slowly, Amad realized what was happening, and his worship of Cas increased. Guided by some instinct or power he could not identify, he discovered a small abandoned shrine to Nerull beneath an old building in the poorest part of town and reconsecrated it to his own lord.

Over the years, however, Amad found his innate sense of spite and anger waning. He still had a temper, could still hold a grudge, but he found that the knowledge that he could take his revenge if he so chose made the actual need for that revenge fade. Amad began to let slights go unanswered, insults unchallenged—not all the time, certainly, but enough to once again attract the attention of his spiteful patron. And Cas, it seems, decided to take matters into his own hands. If Amad were not going to take his own revenge, Cas would send an emissary to take it for him.

Today, a bane wraith (see page 139) stalks the streets of Adirvan, slaying at will. Unlike most bane wraiths, which target the loved ones of those who upset them, this one began by targeting the friends and family of any who had angered Amad. After avenging recent affronts, it continues to pursue the countless half-forgotten slights accrued over Amad's lifetime of bile. The butcher's wife, the carpenter's newborn son, the barmaid's current paramour—all these and more have fallen to the bane wraith's touch. Even worse, the bane wraith has not abandoned its own instincts, and many of its recent victims have nothing to do with Amad at all. For his part, the cleric knows only too well what is occurring, for the bane wraith reports its kills to him every night. But the bane wraith does not follow his orders, and Amad cannot suppress his rage well enough to prevent the spirit from hunting down his old enemies. Amad has begun to go mad with anger and guilt.

Samuel Amad — CR 8

Male human expert 5/cleric 4
CN Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16
hp 55 (9 HD)
Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +12

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee +1 *human bane morningstar* +9/+4 (1d8+4) or
Melee +1 *human bane morningstar* +11/+6 (1d8+6 plus 2d6) against humans
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8
Atk Options spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), damage conversion (convert up to 4 points of damage from one attack into healing for self)*
*Granted power of the Pain domain (see page 81 of *Book of Vile Darkness*)
Special Action rebuke undead (+1, 2d6+3, 4th), sympathetic strike (+8 melee touch, deals damage target dealt to him, up to 25 hp)*
*See granted power of the Spite domain, page 126
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 4th):
2nd—*enthrall, resist energy, sadism*[D]†, *spiritual weapon*
1st—*bane, bestow wound*[D]*, *cause fear, divine favor, shield of faith*
0—*detect magic, detect poison, guidance, light, resistance*
D: Domain spell. Domains: Pain†, Spite**.
† Spell or domain described in *Book of Vile Darkness*
*New spell described on page 127
**New domain described on page 126
Sadism: gain +1 on attacks, saves, and checks for each 10 points of damage dealt (see page 103 of *Book of Vile Darkness*)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 8
SQ aura of chaos
Feats Bane Magic (humanoid [human])*, Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft [carpentry])
*New feat described on page 119
Skills Concentration +14, Craft (carpentry) +15, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perform (lute) +5, Perform (sing) +5, Spellcraft +4
Possessions *+1 human bane morningstar, +2 chain shirt*

PART 1: A RISING OF WRAITHS

The PCs hear of the bloodless killings that have afflicted one particular area of the city. Perhaps they have a friend who dwells in or works near that area who tells them the news. The city watch might come to them for assistance, if they have sufficient reputation, or perhaps they stumble upon one of the bodies themselves. Whatever the case, be it out of the goodness of their hearts or the promise of a hefty reward, the PCs begin investigating the killings. Other than general proximity, nothing about the most recent killings reveals any obvious commonality. Some of the victims are related to others, but many more have no clear connection to one another. If the PCs are able to examine any of the bodies, they find no signs of actual wounds, but a DC 15 Heal or Knowledge (religion) check suggests they might have been slain through some form of ability or energy drain.

At some point during the PCs' investigation—perhaps when they are alone at a crime scene, or passing through a darkened alley—they are attacked by a small band of wraiths, who slide out of the shadows or even appear through the corpses. These wraiths are the spawn of the bane wraith, though the PCs will not know this at the time. If the PCs have seen any of the bodies, a DC 20 Spot check enables them to recognize one or more of the dead among the wraiths' spectral visages.

The PCs might assume that these wraiths are responsible for the killings, and they did commit some of the murders, but the bane wraith is actually behind it all. Once the PCs slay any of its spawn, they draw the bane wraith's attention and its ire.

During their investigations, the PCs discover messages scrawled on walls near, but not actually at, the scenes of the murders. The messages are rambling and written in a shaky hand; they contain such phrases as "I didn't know," and "Gods, I never intended any of this."

The next person to die, unless the PCs somehow anticipate the problem and protect everyone they know, is one of their friends or contacts.

PART 2: A BAND OF ASSASSINS

If the death of a friend does not spur the PCs to greater action, perhaps a second death will, or a third. The bane wraith has now focused its attention on them, and it continues to seek out their friends and allies until they force it to stop. Over the course of their adventure from this point onward, the PCs are attacked from time to time by wraiths that resemble their own deceased allies.

Just to make things that much more confusing, an old enemy of the PCs'—the DM should choose one from earlier in the campaign, as appropriate—decides to take advantage of the situation to obtain some revenge of his own. He hires assassins from a local thieves guild to ensure that the PCs do not survive their current investigation. (Most of these are roughly 5th or 6th level, and are either rogues or rogue/assassins.) These might be disguised as anyone with whom the PCs must deal, from a barmaid or baker to a member of the city watch. They take advantage of any distraction to launch a sneak attack but do not actively engage the PCs in melee if the PCs are already fighting a wraith; they're criminals, not morons, and the last thing they want to do is attract the attention of the undead.

Cas himself takes advantage of the assassins' presence, using their innate hatred and violence to influence their behavior. After one or two failed attempts at slaughtering the PCs, the remaining assassins kidnap one of the PCs' friends. (Or, if the player characters have successfully protected their surviving allies, perhaps a cherished relative of one of those allies.) Whether or not the players believe the kidnappers are the same people responsible for the killings depends on how observant they've been. In any event, the PCs eventually receive a message, delivered by someone both ignorant and expendable—perhaps a street urchin given a silver piece and a note—that says the kidnappers would like to meet to discuss exchanging the hostage for the PCs, and offering an address.

It's a trap, and a fairly rudimentary one at that, but at this point the assassins aren't thinking clearly because of Cas's influence. Should the PCs arrive, they discover the dismembered but not quite dead body of the hostage tacked to the far wall—meant to serve as a distraction so the assassins can attack from behind.

Presuming the PCs prevail, they don't get much useful information from any surviving assassins. They learn only that the guild was hired to assassinate them, hoping their deaths would be blamed on whoever is killing everyone else. The assassins do not know who hired the guild, nor do they know who is responsible for the ongoing string of murders. The PCs have been led on what is ultimately a wild-goose chase. In the interim, unless they were creative in hiding or protecting their loved ones, the bane wraith has killed another of their friends. If the PCs made this impossible, it has returned to slaying others. In either event, there can be no doubt that someone other than the thieves is still murdering people.

PART 3: A SHRINE OF SPITE AND MALICE

How the PCs locate the source of their troubles depends on their actions. If they set a clever trap (perhaps taking the great risk of using their own loved ones as bait) or find a means of anticipating the bane wraith's next victim, they might be able to confront it. However, the bane wraith is a tough opponent, and it's not stupid. If it appears to be losing, it attempts to flee, moving through solid barriers so the PCs cannot follow. If they manage to do so anyway, it eventually leads them to the shrine of Cas.

Alternatively, the PCs might finally unearth Amad through simple investigation. If they backtrack the killings far enough, they eventually learn that the very first victims all came from the same neighborhood. Investigation there reveals that each was the loved one of someone who had dwelt there for years. The PCs might learn Amad's name from someone who remembers that he had a grudge against one of those who has suffered, or a concerned resident might mention that he has been missing since not long after the killings started. In either case, the PCs should eventually find their way to his home.

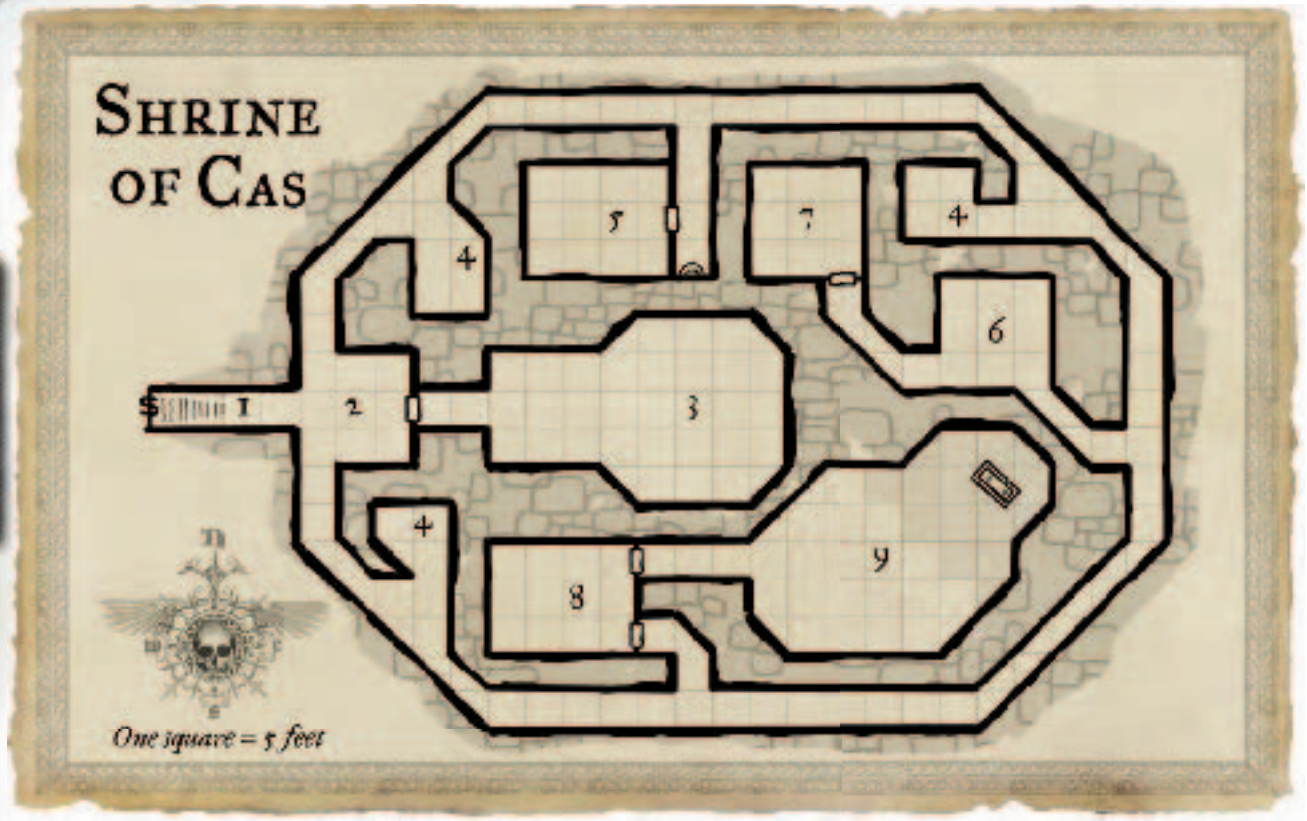
The inside walls are covered in the same maddened scrawl as the walls near several of the crime scenes. Furthermore, DC 15 Search checks eventually turn up several clues that should lead them to the abandoned shrine in the poor quarter of town. They find soot-covered clothes that smell of tanning solution, and only the poor quarter has both leather tanners and forges close together. They find a few old, discarded artifacts with the symbol of Nerull, and anyone with knowledge of the area can tell them of a cult of the Reaper that used to operate out of a warehouse near the east end of town. (This information might also lead the players to conclude, falsely, that Amad is a worshiper of Nerull.)

However they finally find it, a DC 15 Search check in the warehouse reveals a hidden entrance and stairs leading down. The PCs must fight their way through the shrine, facing yet more wraiths, until they find the maddened Amad and the bane wraith in the main sanctuary. (If the PCs managed to slay the bane wraith earlier, Amad is accompanied by two standard wraiths.) Amad babbles incoherently, apologizing for what has happened and begging forgiveness, but none of it will stop him from fighting furiously alongside the wraith and doing his best to slaughter the PCs, should they attack.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Even if the PCs destroy the bane wraith and capture or kill Amad, their troubles might not be over. They have almost certainly come to the attention of the demigod Cas, and the Lord of Spite is the last being in the multiverse to let go of a vendetta once it has begun.

The PCs might succeed in taking Amad alive and seek a cure for his madness. This turn of events could lead them to research both Cas and the history of the shrine to Nerull, either of which could lead to them making



discoveries that other powerful forces do not wish them to unearth.

Simplified Map Key for the Shrine of Cas

Unless otherwise noted, doors in the shrine are locked (Open Lock DC 14). They have hardness 5, 15 hit points, and a break DC of 18. The walls are stone.

1. Stairs Down: The door to the shrine is locked.

2. Entry Chamber: The walls are covered in murals depicting Nerull in his aspect as the Reaper. They have been recently scratched over and slightly mutilated but can still be made out.

3. Chamber of Worship: This is where most cultists attended ceremonies and sacrifices to Nerull when the shrine was active. Two wraiths lurk here.

4. Supply Closet: These closets have cloak pegs, boot racks, and the like. Nothing of value remains.

5. Sleeping Quarters: The priests of Nerull dwelt here. The room is tainted (corruption) and occupied by a wraith. A decapitated statue of Nerull stands just outside the door, its missing head replaced by a crudely stuffed moose head.

6. Dining Chamber: A large oak table, long unused, occupies this room. A few dusty bones lie on the floor, apparently dropped during a meal many years ago. Some of them are humanoid finger bones.

7. Torture Chamber: In this room, unspeakable acts were committed against the enemies of the cult. The room is tainted (perversion), and the various implements of torture attack as Tiny, Medium, and Large animated objects.

8. Chamber of Waiting: This is where the priests of Nerull anointed themselves for ceremonies in the main sanctuary. Basins for blood and unholy water jut from the walls. More murals of Nerull are carved above them; these too have been recently defaced.

9. Main Sanctuary: This large, oddly shaped room consists of two levels; the shaded area is 10 feet higher than the rest. The old stairs have long since collapsed, and this area is now reachable only by climbing a deep relief of the Reaper carved into the wall. The altar (marked on the map) has been defaced and now serves as the base for a small wooden sculpture of Cas's horned visage. Amad and the bane wraith lurk here; Amad attempts to cast spells from the upper level before closing for melee.

Illus. by D. Hanley

Few campaign concepts are more powerful if done well than a horror-based campaign, and few can be as tricky to run well. A single horror-based encounter can be dropped into an ongoing campaign; even a horror story does not require a fundamental change in the way DM and players approach the game. An entire horror campaign, however, requires work on everyone's part.

It's not for everyone. Many people play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS for pure escapism. They like being nigh-unstoppable heroes in a world where the difference between good and evil is clear and evil can almost always be defeated by the swing of a sword or the incantation of a spell. D&D is designed with that style of play in mind. Sometimes, however, players want a different type of experience. They want to play with darker themes, or portray characters who might, in fact, be the underdogs of the tale. They want to feel that same shudder they experience when watching a good horror movie or reading a scary novel.

It takes effort to put a horror campaign together, but it's not as hard as you might think. To begin with, fantasy and horror are close cousins. They both involve weird magic, horrific creatures, and truly evil beings. Many of the classic pulp fantasy writers who defined the sword-and-sorcery genre, such as Robert E. Howard and Fritz Leiber, used elements of horror. Similarly, many of the horror writers of the period, such as H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, made use of fantasy in their material. This trend continues into modern literature, from Stephen King to Neil Gaiman. The line between horror and fantasy is thin and easily crossed. All it requires is the desire to do so, and the manipulation of a few details.

THE BASICS OF HORROR GAMING

Before you dive into creating your story or your villains, you should consider a few preliminaries. None of them requires you to do an undue amount of preparation, but there are certain elements you should certainly keep in mind.

First and foremost, be certain you've absorbed the information in previous chapters on horror-based encounters and stories; all of it applies to a horror campaign. For instance, a campaign might have a specific mood or moods (see page 22). Not every story in that campaign need express that particular atmosphere, but the majority of them should. Each story can also have its own secondary mood, allowing you some contrast as you build up the overall mood more slowly than you might do in a stand-alone story.

In some cases, the information in the previous chapters applies even more strongly to full-length campaigns. You might be able to convey a horror encounter, or even a horror story, without your descriptions being too detailed, but it's simply impossible to maintain a long-running dark mood without sufficient detail and description.

THE DM/PLAYER CONTRACT

A horror game requires an element of cooperation from everyone involved. A DM-against-player attitude, where the players are specifically trying to beat the DM, will not work in a horror campaign. The game is still D&D, and there's certainly an element of competition in combat and the like, but if everyone's not on the same page and making an effort, it's simply not going to work. It's frankly impossible to force a player to portray fear if he doesn't want to.

The DM and players must agree from the get-go that a horror campaign is something in which they all wish to participate. That agreement comes with certain obligations.

Obligations of the DM

To make a horror campaign work, the DM must commit to the following specifics.

To Provide the Necessary Mood and Detail: Horror requires description; see Creating Horror on page 7.

To Go Only as Far as the Players Wish: Some people have a lower threshold for horror than others. No matter how horrific you wish to make it, D&D is still a game; it's meant to be fun. If one of your players is becoming uncomfortable with a scene or a description, stop.

To Avoid Taking Advantage of the Situation: Horror often involves foes too powerful for the PCs to defeat, at least by standard or obvious means. Don't use this as an excuse to slaughter or torment the characters without reason. You're the DM; you don't need to prove that you've got the bigger weapons in your arsenal. If you make changes to monsters or rules, do so because they heighten the mood, not because you want to beat the players. And be certain that players know in advance about any rules changes that affect them directly.

To Avoid Frustrating the Players: Horror often involves mystery as well as seemingly unbeatable foes. These elements, if drawn out for too long, can prove frustrating for players. No matter how convoluted your plots or how powerful your villains, you must allow the players to experience victories and discoveries, even if only occasionally.

To Avoid Going Too Easy: It's hard on the player to lose a well-loved character, and you shouldn't kill one at whim. At the same time, the danger in a horror game must feel real. If the dice and circumstances say that a character dies or suffers some other gruesome fate, you should probably allow it to happen.

Obligations of the Players

Players must also make certain commitments in order to bring a dark and vivid life to their horror campaign.

To Cooperate with the DM in Setting the Mood: A player who refuses to allow himself to be swept up in the game, and who will not portray his character as scared or shocked when the situation warrants, destroys the mood not only for himself but for the entire group.

To Accept that Horrific Events will Happen to Them: In a horror campaign, not every ending is a happy one. The PCs will, at times, encounter opponents too powerful and too terrible for them to defeat. They will not always be able to prevent their loved ones from suffering. They won't have as high a survival rate as characters in other campaigns. They should not expect every fight to be winnable and every plotline to end on a positive note.

To Create Horror-Appropriate Characters: Horror works only when the characters have something to lose. A character with a rich background, goals and ambitions, and friends and family is a much better choice for a horror game than the stoic loner with no emotional attachments. If a character fears nothing, then nothing inspires fear, and while that might fit certain heroic archetypes, it doesn't encourage horror roleplaying.

To Avoid Metagame Thinking: A character in a horror game who thinks, "Dear gods, that creature utterly ignored my *fireball*! It cannot be a normal troll!" is fine. A player who grows irate at the DM for creating a flame-breathing troll is not. Fear is about surprises and the unknown. Trust the DM enough to accept that he has a reason for making changes. Further, don't assume that the DM won't let a character die; this is a horror game, after all. The danger is real, and players should treat it as such.

To Tell the DM if it's Gone Too Far: This is a game. This is about having fun. If the DM's idea of horror goes further than you're comfortable with, tell him so.

SETTING

As with any D&D game, the choice of setting in a horror campaign is a vital aspect of the game. Even though the setting remains in the background for the most part, its nature and details can make or break the attempts to create tension and terror in the PCs. Unlike the stand-alone horror encounter or adventure, the setting of a campaign is not something into which you can dip a toe and then leave; it's set for a good long while.

The first and most basic decision you have to make is whether you wish to create a setting specifically geared toward horror (or a certain type of horror) or whether you want to run a horror game in a fantasy world that feels more traditional, or at least is not overtly designed for horror.

HORROR-ORIENTED SETTINGS

The advantage of building a horror-oriented setting from the ground up is that you won't have to make alterations in it to encourage feelings of tension and fear. On the other hand, the nature of the setting can forewarn the players of the sort of horrors to expect (all these handy garden stakes stacked in the garlic field), and it makes it harder to intersperse the campaign with nonhorror stories.

A horror-oriented setting need not be an entire world. It can be a segment of a world (an isolated backwater or literally benighted kingdom) or even part of a preexisting setting that's not particularly geared toward horror.

If you're designing or choosing a horror-oriented setting to fit your campaign, it's important to decide what sort of horror—which mood or moods (see page 22)—you're shooting for. That doesn't mean you have to restrict yourself entirely to stories of that type, simply that you should select a setting that best supports the sort of game you're most likely to run.

Some possibilities for horror-oriented settings include the following.

—A land in the midst of a major war. Thousands of stories have been told regarding the horrors of war, and for good reason. The constant death, the gore, the suffering, the potential for battle-magic and monsters run amok, the ghosts

of the dead—all these promote circumstances in which the PCs might have to resort to despicable acts to survive. You could situate the war in a familiar setting, since a war of this magnitude changes the political and cultural landscape to such an extent that it is, for most purposes, a new setting during and after the fact.

—A completely alien landscape. Perhaps through planar travel, a major arcane catastrophe, the actions of a mad god, or the results of years of magical warfare, a region (or an entire world) has been rendered utterly alien. The laws of nature, weather, magic, or physics might no longer work as expected. Living beings do not follow their normal patterns of behavior, and creatures the likes of which the PCs have never seen are commonplace. The terrain is blasted and empty, or it consists of mountains of impossible shapes and growths that can only loosely be termed plants. An alien setting can be difficult to sustain in long-term play, and the weirdness can overwhelm any tension the DM is building, so this is probably best for shorter campaigns or unsettling interludes in a longer one.

—A region in which humans are not the dominant race. Most D&D settings are written with the perspective that humans are the most numerous and most widespread of all the races. A setting in which this is not the case—in which elves, gnomes, orcs, githyanki, mind flayers, or tieflings form the majority—is going to feel substantially different. If a relatively benign race holds dominion, the setting might only feel slightly off, due to the unusual cultural, religious, and architectural norms. This atmosphere isn't horrific in itself, but it helps build a sense of dissonance before you spring the real terrors on the PCs. If, however, a malign race controls the region, humans and other usually common races might be oppressed minorities, forced to work in slave camps or surviving only at the whim of their inhuman masters. They might even be reduced to the status of food or breeding stock.

—A setting with an unbalanced or malign pantheon. What would the world be like if the gods were literally insane? If an ancient power such as Tharizdun or Cthulhu had returned and assumed control? If one of the setting's most evil deities had triumphed in war against the other gods? It would certainly be a dark world, full of plague and suffering, with the evil races rising to dominance and every bastion of good slowly hunted down and destroyed. The world has room for wars, hopelessness, claustrophobia, and—just maybe—one final desperate hope for the forces of good.

—A land conjoined with another plane. Maybe the gates of Hell have opened, bringing elemental fire scorching across planar boundaries, or perhaps the realm of nightmares is no longer separated from the waking world. Whatever the case, fiends and horrors are unleashed upon the world, and the Material Plane can begin transforming into a far less hospitable realm. Can the heroes possibly find some means of separating the worlds, or at least protecting their home from the other realm? Or must they, and the world around them, learn to adapt to the new circumstances?

—A tainted world. Tainted areas (see Taint on page 62) can appear in any setting. In worlds where a region is tainted, the borderlands are a truly horrific area in which to dwell. Grotesque and dreadful monsters appear from the tainted lands, and brave heroes must occasionally enter the region to rescue others, at the risk of becoming tainted themselves in the process. Even worse, however, is a world entirely in the grip of taint. This approach can work only if sporadic islands of purity still exist, or if you've changed the rules for acquiring taint to drastically slow down the progression. Still, picture a world where nature itself has become vile and corrupt, and the PCs can only hope to survive with minimal taint, or perhaps find some means of escape. Particularly surprising to PCs is a region in which the taint is not caused by supernatural evil but by pervasive human evil. This region could be the site of genocidal execution camps, or even a small town where every local is hiding some vile secret or perversion.

—An isolated setting. The setting itself somehow traps the PCs in deadly circumstances, allowing little hope for escape or even survival, unless the heroes use every ounce of wit and every resource they possess. This isolation could be physical, such as an underground complex or a haunted castle; geographical, such as a storm-swept island, a mountaintop domain, or a sprawling desert; or even mystical or planar in nature, such as banishment to the Abyss or a demiplane that entraps all who enter within an impassable border of mist.

HORROR IN STANDARD SETTINGS

Most published settings are not specifically designed to accommodate horror campaigns. Neither is horror prominently in mind during the development of standard settings based on traditional fantasy elements. But horror can be all the more effective when embedded in a standard setting precisely because it stands out from the norm, stimulating the same sense of shock we feel when we hear about horrific acts in the real world. Another benefit of employing standard settings is that the DM can more easily alternate horror tales and lighter stories. But standard settings probably won't provide as many horror story hooks as worlds designed with terror in mind.

Since most of these settings aren't inherently horrific in their own right (although many of them feature dark areas), here are several techniques for making a traditional world darker or evoking horror from everyday details.

Highlight the extremes of the culture in question. If an area is poor and oppressed, describe the environment as depressing and filthy. Few people smile, and laughter is a foreign sound, as workers shuffle to their shops or till their sparsely sprouting fields. The government is corrupt to the core, its officials far more interested in playing political games with one another to increase their own power than in seeing to the basic necessities of their people. Crime runs rampant, and terrible creatures lurk in the shadows of alleyways and the nauseating depths of the sewers. Joy is unknown; the people believe that survival is barely more attractive a fate than death, and the question is not *if* they will suffer some terrible end, but *when*. Keep in mind that life could be this grim for medieval peasants, and although D&D doesn't simulate any particular historical period, most fantasy settings embrace some elements of medieval life.

Alternatively, the DM can choose the opposite route. The area in which the story takes place is, while perhaps not a paradise, a shining example of the heights of humanoid achievement. Gleaming white towers rise to tickle the clouds. The streets are clean and patrolled by watchmen duty-bound to see to the health and safety of the citizenry. Much of the populace is wealthy, but even the poorer laborers and farmers are not miserable, for the fields offer plenty of foodstuffs, and the monarch is just and fair. Life is hardly perfect, and people

still face their share of tragedy and disappointment, but complete unhappiness is a rare thing. At least, it is until the DM's plot begins and the villains or monsters appear. They might attempt to fit in, infiltrating society and masquerading as part of it, or their activities might be more blatant. In either case, the sudden corruption of this pristine environment is all the more terrible for its contrasts, standing out like a bloodstain on white silk sheets.

Many of the standard tropes of fantasy are themselves pretty horrific if you follow them to their logical conclusions, or seek the meanings and motives behind them. Some examples (such as why dragons might covet wealth or kidnap princesses) are presented in Chapter 6: Creatures of the Night. Also innately horrific are creatures (such as ghouls or vampires) that propagate by turning the living into the undead. Working steadily, such creatures could turn an entire community into undead in a matter of nights. The fey who steals children from their beds is scary enough, but what does he want the kids for? What does the dark cult mean to do once it succeeds in summoning Demogorgon or Mephistopheles? What if the ancient relic for which the king's knights have quested for decades is actually a cursed, malevolent thing that brings suffering and despair to the realm? How does the wizard, locked high in his tower with his crystal ball, intend to use the knowledge he's gleaned from all across the kingdom? Once the doppelgangers replace the king and his advisors, what do they plan to do with their new kingdom? These expansions or variations on traditional fantasy stories could fit in almost any campaign setting and lead to some truly horrifying narratives.

Embroil the heroes in a widespread catastrophe, one that has the potential to reshape the entire campaign setting. Plague sweeps the nation, killing thousands and maiming more. People take desperate and violent steps to protect themselves: burning the homes of the diseased with the strickened still inside, slaughtering strangers, blaming foreigners or social minorities for the unclean or unholy habits that brought this curse down upon them all. With so many dying in agony, the numbers of the undead increase within the plague zones. Nations place soldiers along their borders, either to stop the flood of refugees or to take advantage of the chaos and invade their neighbors the instant the plague abates. Alternatively, the catastrophe could be environmental, as storms race in from the ocean and water levels rise. People battle for available food as well as for shelter—not only from the storm but from the monsters that ride in on the winds and tides. Or perhaps a war has begun between nations, one that threatens to escalate to the point that the setting is no longer recognizable. Disasters can bring out the worst in people, and sometimes the most horrific experience of all is not battling the creatures that accompany disasters but surviving the evil deeds of frightened people who will do anything to survive.

A new faction rises to power in the government, or the PCs come into conflict with the existing one. This situation might not feel particularly horrific at first, but consider the resources available to a monarch or ruling church—and then think about historical atrocities committed by governing bodies in the real world. A theocratic inquisition on behalf of a god not the PCs' own, or an ethnic purge as a racist leader comes to power, should be scarier than any monster creeping out of the shadows—especially if, as is so often the case in history, the government deceives or manipulates most of the population into supporting its actions.

Set a portion of the campaign in a foreign land with a very different culture. For instance, if your setting is based loosely on medieval Europe, consider a series of games after the characters have been transplanted to a region modeled after Egypt, Africa, South America, or India. While there is nothing inherently horrific about finding oneself in an unfamiliar culture, the drastic changes can make the characters feel out of place, unprepared, even somewhat paranoid—giving you a solid foundation on which to layer other techniques that increase tension.

HORROR CAMPAIGNS IN PUBLISHED SETTINGS

What follows is a brief list of suggested plot hooks for running horror campaigns in published D&D settings. In some cases, these simply involve extrapolating possible future events in the setting, while others involve choosing a historical event and altering its outcome, resulting in a very different world than the one currently in print.

Eberron

—A serial killer stalks the streets and sky-bridges of Sharn. Divination magic and watch investigations have failed to turn up even the slightest clue as to his identity or whereabouts. His victims have been members of every conceivable race, with only one thing in common: Each has been a veteran of the Last War. The authorities have not yet realized that he is choosing his victims based on the battles in which they fought—killing them in an order that matches the sequence of the great battles of the war. Given the length of the war, this means his list might have hundreds of victims still earmarked.

—Gods only know how it happened, but Dal Quor has been restored to its normal orbit through the Astral Plane. It grows coterminous with Eberron, and creatures far more alien and malicious than even the dreaded illithids are beginning to swarm across the border. Eberron faces nothing less than another invasion by the quori, their minions, and even worse beings, and few of its citizens know yet that they are in danger.

—The border of mists surrounding the Mournland begins to slowly but steadily expand. The desolation of the former nation of Cyre (now occupied by horrendous beings) expands with it. Villages evacuate as mile after mile falls to the creeping mist. Will the expansion cease on its own, or continue until the wizards and clerics of Khorvaire find a way to stop it? And what has happened to those communities now trapped behind the mists, unable to flee before being overwhelmed?

—The Keeper of the Silver Flame has launched a new inquisition, like the one that nearly exterminated the lycanthropes. This new endeavor targets not merely lycanthropes, but shifters, druids, and any beings who possess a strong link to the natural world or the ability to shapeshift. Any who would aid or hide such individuals are also declared enemies of the Silver Flame. Thrane's populace grows grim and stoic as their lives become a whirl of oppression and fear. Can this truly be the will of the Silver Flame, or has some other entity managed to insinuate itself into the Keeper's head, passing off its own desires as divine mandate?

—Heroes exploring the reaches of Xen'drik discover that the ancient giants might be dead, but they aren't all gone. Already beleaguered by rival explorers, the heroes encounter

the surviving servants of the long-dead necromancer king Addis-Ro. They must find their way through dense jungle and ancient ruins, battling undead giants and other terrors forgotten millennia ago.

Faerûn

—The rift to the Plane of Shadow through which the city of Shade recently appeared has never completely closed. Hidden from arcane detection by the high-magic of the city itself and the shade wizards who populate it, the rift grows ever larger and ever more ingrained in the fabric of Toril's reality. The geographical region around it is inundated with shadow-stuff; living creatures give birth to shades, the dead frequently return as shadows, and color and emotion are slowly fading from the region. If allowed to spread, this effect might reach heavily populated areas or overrun all Toril.

—A few surviving followers of Iyachtu Xvim refuse to accept that he has been destroyed and replaced by his father, Bane. Some infiltrate the cult of Bane itself, but most have crept into positions of influence in various governments, organizations, and even the churches of other gods. They steer these agencies against Bane's cult; because this is a goal on which most good beings can agree, they garner no suspicion in doing so. However, the methods of these well-meaning organizations slowly grow more and more dubious, as the Xvimites argue that the goal of defeating Bane justifies the means. Eventually, governments and good organizations (such as splinter groups of Harpers) stoop to such evil methods that even the suspicion of aiding Bane's followers—or simply standing in the way of destroying them—results in dire consequences. For themselves, the Xvimites believe that if they can both destroy Bane's power base and corrupt the forces of good in the process, they can raise their own fallen lord. Where they currently gain their power, with Xvim deceased, is unclear.

—The heroes are explorers who find themselves lost and alone in the lands of Maztica. They don't know the culture, the customs, or even the language of the locals. Already off-balance, the heroes are accused of a horrific crime, imprisoned, and awaiting sacrifice in an ancient and bloody Maztican ceremony. They must escape, survive the alien rites and magic of the Maztican priests, and uncover the true killer—which might not even be human or any creature with which the heroes are familiar.

—In this vision of the Realms, the Time of Troubles had a very different ending. Few if any of the gods succeeded in regaining their rightful place in the heavens. Rather, the majority of the pantheon is now made up of risen mortals, most of whom have little notion of the powers they wield. They are beset from all sides by extraplanar and demonic forces seeking to take advantage of their inexperience, and they war with one another for dominance and control of overlapping domains. Toril itself has become a terrifying, desolate place, with wide regions of wild magic and taint where the power of the gods has either fled the world or become too concentrated. Churches and nations war with one another in desperate bids to hold on to the power they once wielded in the name of their gods, or for control over rapidly depleting resources. Nothing, from magic to weather to the turn of the seasons, works exactly as it should. Even monsters native to Toril are supplanted by terrors from other worlds, drawn by the collapsing natural laws.

A conjunction with Dal Quor would unleash horrors

Greyhawk

—In this variant of history, Iuz won the Greyhawk Wars. The Old One holds sway over the Flanaess, ruling with an iron fist and commanding armies of humanoid footsoldiers and fiendish generals. Those humans, elves, and dwarves who swore fealty to Iuz serve him as little more than favored slaves or disposable soldiers. The majority are not so lucky and toil in endless misery as downtrodden slaves. Those few kingdoms that survive outside his control are pale shadows of what they once were, rogue states still pursuing a guerilla war they have already lost. Even now, these kingdoms cannot help but squabble among themselves for a preeminent place in the order of dying nations, their skirmishes making Iuz's remaining tasks all the easier.

—The efforts of Tharizdun's greatest cultists have finally paid off. In the heart of an idol to the mad god, deep in an underground catacomb, a mighty priest has opened a pinprick hole through the dimensional walls of Tharizdun's prison. The power of the god seeps out into Oerth, corrupting the surrounding lands with taint and madness. Creatures unknown in this world, warped by taint and hailing from the Far Realm, swarm into the Material Plane. As the breach grows, the corruption spreads, and Tharizdun himself will eventually emerge into Oerth, there to wreak untold devastation.

—A single individual has obtained both the *Hand* and the *Eye of Vecna*—and the *Sword of Kas*, as well! Combined, these three remnants of the great lich's powers have transformed him into something considerably more than human. He has the power of a demigod and the mystic might of an archmage and believes himself nothing less than Vecna's heir ("Vecna's daughter"). Before his betrayal at his lieutenant's hands, Vecna nearly conquered Oerth with his armies of undead, summoned fiends, and mystically empowered soldiers. If

Illus. by W. England

someone cannot find away to stop him, his heir is sure to continue where Vecna left off. Already, entire communities lay burned behind him, their dead marching mindlessly at the forefront of his growing army. . . .

PLOT IN A HORROR CAMPAIGN

To make a game truly horrific, you need more than mood, new rules, or even a truly scary villain. You need a solid plot, one that will engross the players and encourage them to keep going to see what happens next, to really get into character. It can be the same sort of plot you would find in any other fantasy campaign. Dungeon crawls, wilderness exploration, behind-the-lines wartime missions, and political maneuvering all have great horror potential. The only true requirement is that the story be solid and believable in the context of the setting: Anything else will make it difficult for your players to really feel what their characters are experiencing.

Don't create all your horror stories as mysteries. Mystery and horror fit well together, and horror usually contains elements of the unknown. But if every story is a mystery, the players can grow bored with a too-familiar pattern. Include mysteries frequently, but don't rely on them exclusively.

LONG-TERM HORROR

Creating the proper mood of horror is not the hardest part of running a horror campaign. Rather, maintaining that mood is often far more difficult. You cannot expect to keep the level of tension steady throughout the entire campaign. Even when interspersing the horror with stories and events that are less scary, however, it is possible to maintain a low level of tension throughout by using the following techniques.

Curses and Other Lasting Effects

Most debilitating or penalizing effects in D&D, such as curses, negative levels, and the like, function for a fixed duration or until cured by a few select spells. On occasion, however, these effects can open up substantial story potential to afflict a PC (or even the entire party) with a more long-term consequence. These effects might be magically induced or simple, mundane issues that the PCs must work to overcome.

Amnesia: The PCs all awaken in an unfamiliar cave. They have no memory of how they got there; their last recollection is of sitting down together in their favorite tavern. The only set of footprints they can find appears to be their own. When they return to civilization and speak to someone, they find that two years have passed. What happened to them during that time? Who did this to them? How can they find out? And possibly worst of all, why does everyone seem scared of them? What did they *do* during that time?

Amnesia can be trite if overused or used flippantly, but if you base an entire story on finding out the truth it can drive the experience home for the PCs. The options are practically limitless. Were they possessed? Have their memories been erased? Did they do this to themselves for some reason? What sort of evil acts might they have committed? How has the world changed in the intervening time? Are their friends and family and loved ones all right?

It's best to use amnesia to hide events that have occurred since character creation; unless the player volunteers for it ahead of time, you probably won't want to use amnesia as an excuse to change major details of a character's background. The player created the character he wants to play, and a player might naturally object to being told that his character is not who he thought he was.

"Let all those you love leave you even as I do!"

Illus. by R. Gallegos

Curses: Curses from mythology and fiction often include far more ornate punishments than those available under the actual *bestow curse* spell. Such curses cannot be invoked through the simple casting of a spell but only through a combination of great emotional power and horrific circumstance. For instance, suppose a woman dying in a fire set by her lover curses him with the words, "Let all those you love leave you even as I do!" From that point on, horrible misfortune and agonizing death seem to follow the cursed man, striking down his loved ones and friends. Alternatively, a suitor spurned by a vain woman curses her to "always suffer the attentions of others." The next time a random killer stalks the streets, or a town is looking for someone to blame for the death of a child or the coming of a plague.

These curses do not have actual mechanical models of implementation. They are, essentially, story hooks for the DM and motivations for the players, who are most certainly going to seek ways of ridding their characters of the curse. In some instances, powerful spells suffice. In others, the DM can determine that only a particular action or sequence of events lifts the curse. Perhaps the man in the first example must be willing—and actually attempt—to sacrifice his own life to save another; perhaps the woman in the second example must fall in love with an ugly, destitute man who wants nothing to do with her. Let the nature of the curse suggest the means for overcoming it, and don't make any curse completely impossible to overcome or completely debilitating while in effect. You want to make the character's life interesting, not unplayable.

Similarly, don't overdo it. Not every slight is sufficient to warrant a curse. Not every angry person has the emotional power to invoke one. One or two per campaign, under the most appropriate circumstances, should be enough. Otherwise, it becomes a

cliché and loses its impact—and if it seems too easy, the PCs might wonder why they themselves can't curse others.

Disease: In most instances, diseases are relatively easy to cure so long as the PC can find a mid-level cleric or paladin. Consider the danger, however, of a disease that is resistant to mystical cures but is otherwise nonmagical. It's not as far-fetched as it sounds. In a world with prevalent magic, it seems possible—even likely—that some diseases might mutate to resist spells, even as diseases in the real world mutate to resist antibiotics. Such a disease might also resist standard healing techniques and be impossible to recover from without one very specific treatment or ingredient. A character slowly dying of some strange illness has great motivation to hunt for the only cure, be it a rare herb or the blood of a virgin mixed with holy water.

You'll want to create your own disease, or heavily modify the existing ones (see page 292 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). As written, the diseases progress fairly quickly, as they are designed for settings where cures are plentiful. In circumstances in which cures are rare and difficult to find, a disease progressing that quickly would likely incapacitate or kill a character before he could overcome it. Consider keeping the save DC to resist daily damage very low, or even decreasing the frequency from once a day to once a week.

Injury: Like disease, injury is not normally a long-running problem for D&D characters. As an optional rule, however, you can decide that a character takes a debilitating wound from which he cannot easily recover. *Regenerate* would normally resolve the problem (unless the PCs are low-level and far from civilization), but in this case it might only provide temporary relief, especially if you treat the injury as a curse (see above) that can only be healed when a special condition is met.

Magical Disease: Lycanthropy is the single most famous magical disease, but others exist as well. These diseases are practically curses in their own right. They do not reduce the victim's health but instead bestow some other symptom, such as turning into a monstrous animal at the full moon. The character might not at first be aware he's contracted the disease, only discovering it when he awakens with the blood of the innocent congealing in his throat. Several means of curing lycanthropy exist, but most require either immediate detection of the disease or access to a mid- to high-level cleric. If neither is available, the affliction can continue for some time. You might decide that, like the mundane diseases described above, lycanthropy is not be so easily cured: The reluctant werewolf questing for a cure is a staple of many fantasy/horror tales because it works.

Mechanical Penalties: Several of the options given above, and many spells or attacks in the core rules, bestow long-term or permanent mechanical penalties. These might be realistic, and it's certainly frightening for a character to suddenly be less capable than he used to be. However, D&D is a game. Even with the understanding that they're playing in a horror-based campaign, some players can grow frustrated with long-term or constant penalties. Furthermore, a curse or penalty applied to one PC in the party can make that character less effective than his companions, effectively reducing his ECL. If you cannot find a way to bestow such penalties universally, then long-term mechanical penalties should be used sparingly, and for far less time than the other options presented here.

Phobias: A character quirk that afflicts many real people and fictional characters but is rarely seen in fantasy roleplaying games, phobias are highly appropriate for a horror-oriented campaign. You can work with your players to establish the characters' phobias during character creation or determine that certain in-game events inspire phobias. For instance, a character who nearly dies after being engulfed by a swarm of spiders could easily develop arachnophobia. See page 61 for more rules on phobias.

The Suffering of Others

Assuming your PCs aren't completely heartless, the suffering of others can prove far more horrific than anything done directly to the characters. The heroes are capable of taking care of themselves, but most of the world's NPCs—the shopkeepers, the barmaids, the village children, the farmers—are not. If your players are portraying true heroes, atrocities inflicted on the innocent and helpless should bring the PCs' blood to the boil in a flash.

The most effective NPC victims are the friends, loved ones, and family of the PCs. Pull victims from the characters' backgrounds, threatening the old mother they left back in the north, the wife waiting at home, or the brother trying to follow in his older sister's footsteps and become an adventurer. Alternatively, unless the PCs are remarkably unfriendly and insular, they've probably made friends and allies during their travels. Whether it's a romantic liaison left behind two cities back or simply the barkeep they always go to for information and the best ale in the city, most PCs have someone they care about.

In addition to enhancing the mood, casting friends and loved ones as major NPCs in a horror game can generate a staggering number of plot hooks. Murdered or injured people demand vengeance. Kidnapped people require rescue.

HIDDEN CONDITIONS

The characters, and even the actual players, need not be aware of every condition from which the PCs suffer. Everyone suspects lycanthropy will ensue from a werewolf bite, but what if the lycanthrope were hidden among a pack of normal animals or had coated a dagger with its saliva and attacked in human form? In the case of amnesia, perhaps the entire party is missing a six-month period but the PCs don't yet realize it.

With a player willing to stretch the boundaries, it can be possible to include long-running conditions that involve the character's background. Perhaps the PC has been able to speak to spirits since he was a child, and never realized it was at all unusual (see Spirit Sense on page 124). A character discovers that he is in fact part demon, or that his memories of his modest, pleasant life are faked and he's actually responsible for a string of horrific crimes.

The revelation of hidden conditions can upset players who dislike their character concepts being changed, so be certain that you're dealing with a player who's willing to accept such revelations and alterations.

Diseased or cursed friends inspire quests for the cure. Of particular power is the relative or loved one who turns out to be the villain, either due to possession, lycanthropy, seduction, or simply temperament. Can the heroes bring themselves to kill their friend to save others—especially if he's really not responsible for his own actions?

Even in a fantasy story, however, the bounds of coincidence can be stretched only so far. If a PC's friend or loved one happens to be the random victim of some horror, that's believable. The third or fourth time it happens, suspension of disbelief fades. If the result of friendships with NPCs is always tragedy, the players will start creating loner characters who never form social ties. So victimize their friends and family sparingly—save it for when you're really trying to make an impact. Whenever possible, give your villains a reason for selecting a particular victim, rather than explaining it away as random chance. Villains the heroes have faced before, or their allies or surviving minions, might target the PCs' relations as vengeance or as a means to deflect attention from their iniquitous schemes.

Not everyone who suffers need be innocent. The horror genre is replete with tales of those whose torment is poetic justice for past sins, those who make foolish wishes or bargains and suffer the consequences. The PCs can see evil befall those who have themselves been evil, and take from it a warning that their own behavior must remain beyond reproach.

VILLAINS

While Chapter 2: Dread Adventures discusses the various types of villains you might use in a horror-based game, you have additional details to consider in a full-length horror campaign. Although not every villain should be a fixture of the entire campaign, you don't want the PCs mowing through them the same way they might slash through goblins in a traditional dungeon crawl. In addition to what they do, and how and why they do it, part of what makes villains truly horrific is how often they engage in their nefarious activities.

FREQUENCY OF APPEARANCE

When constructing a villain for a horror game, you should decide whether you intend the character to appear for only a single game or story, to pop up now and again throughout the campaign, or to be a continual and perhaps overwhelming presence in the setting.

A one-shot villain is substantially easier to create, although it can still be challenging. You need not develop long-running plots or layers of motives; knowing why he's engaged in this particular activity at this particular time is sufficient. A one-shot villain is often less powerful or resourceful than a recurring villain, since it's expected that the PCs will be able to defeat him soundly, killing him or otherwise ensuring that he will not return.

In a horror campaign, even a one-shot villain should have deeper motives than the average random encounter. You want the PCs to find him interesting and challenging, so he should be more than a collection of numbers. Why is he killing these people, or raising the dead, or attempting to *charm* the mayor, or summoning a demon? The plot need not be complex, but it should be credible. Nothing breaks the mood or suspension of disbelief in a horror campaign like a villain with a silly motive, and the trap of silly motives yawns widest with one-shot villains. Having a believable motivation and goals also helps you adjust when your supposedly one-shot villain lives to fight another day.

The second tier of villains is made up of opponents destined to appear multiple times but not meant to provide an ongoing threat. In a campaign mostly centered on a single story that includes sporadic side quests not related to the main plot, a recurring villain might show up in half of the side quests. He is the moving factor behind a subplot with which the PCs deal only when they have a few moments of respite from the main story. Alternatively, a recurring villain might be part of the main story but not play the primary mover and shaker; he might represent an interested third party or be a powerful but untrustworthy henchman of the main villain.

It can be more difficult to develop believable motivation for recurring villains than long-term villains. You must create not one set of motives, but one for each story in which the recurring villain appears. If the evil wizard had been raising an army of zombies when the PCs first encountered him, why is he working with a cabal of dark druids the second time? If he has a single compelling goal, it must be wide enough to accommodate all manner of storylines. A recurring villain should be either more powerful or trickier than a one-shot villain, because you're expecting him to survive the PCs' first attempts to stop him and return to trouble them again. Do not make him too powerful, though, or the PCs might begin to wonder why he isn't the driving force of the campaign.

It is the long-term, story-shaping villain who has the greatest impact on a horror campaign. This is the entity that drives long-running plots that span years of game time and many levels of character advancement. Think of the fantasy and horror series you know, be they novels, television, or movie serials. The single villain who persevered through them all, who was always the main foil for the heroes—that's the long-term villain.

A long-term villain must be gripping in a way others need not be. His motives must be deep, his history detailed. Every one of his schemes throughout a campaign should be devoted to a single goal, although that goal need not be obvious until well into the campaign. He must keep the players intrigued during his numerous appearances and machinations. A long-term villain should be exceptionally powerful and resourceful, so much so that the PCs would be foolish to try to take him on directly—at least in the early stages of the campaign. Just as important, he must have an excellent reason not to simply exterminate the meddlesome PCs the first time he realizes they're a threat to his plan—perhaps none of his lieutenants proves up to the task and he simply does not want to run the risk of a battle to the death with them himself, or perhaps they have a role to play in his schemes of which they are themselves unaware.

By the same token, long-term villains tend to inspire emotions that other villains do not. Your players might be angry at the one-shot villain who caused them trouble, or frustrated at the one who keeps escaping only to pop up again later. But the villain pulling the strings throughout the entire campaign, who has deceived, defeated, or escaped them time and time again . . . your players are likely to grow to hate him. Given enough of that hatred, the mere presence of the villain can be sufficient to drive the campaign, as the PCs refuse to give up until they have brought him down. The culmination of

the campaign—the defeat of the adversary who has dogged the PCs' steps since day one—is one of the most satisfying experiences D&D has to offer.

For every villain, the DM should have at least the basic outline of a backup plan. Your one-shot villain might manage to escape if the PCs have a run of bad luck or poor planning. It would be a waste not to use him again, especially since the players are likely to gain a lot of personal satisfaction from a second shot at the one who got away. A recurring villain or even a long-term villain might fall before you intended if the PCs are particularly creative. If the players come up with an unanticipated way of taking down an adversary you thought was too powerful for them, don't deny them their victory. You can always have a subordinate or ally step in to take the villain's place in the plot, or allow the villain himself to return from defeat and even death. If you have this backup plan sketched out ahead of time, you won't need to stop the game or rethink your entire campaign if the unexpected occurs.

SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK

The PCs have won their hard-earned victory. The villain has fallen, his schemes shattered, his lair in flames. Perhaps they played their checkmate before you anticipated, throwing a huge monkey wrench into your plans for the rest of the campaign. What do you do for an encore?

Why, you have the villain pop back up, or you have the PCs' victory turn around and bite them.

Unless you've altered the campaign setting to make resurrection magic exceedingly rare or even nonexistent, odds are good that your players have taken advantage of such things (or at least have taken comfort from the knowledge that they could). Yet few ever seem to consider that NPCs and villains have access to the same abilities. Their adversary might have arranged for an ally to *resurrect* him. Perhaps the evil wizard had completed all but the final steps of the rite of lichdom, and his death at the PCs' hands triggers the ritual. It might be that the villain's rage at his defeat is so strong, it binds him to the Material Plane as a ghost.

If you would prefer not to bring a dead villain back to life (or undeath), but still want your players to continue in the current plotline, make use of minions and allies. A trusted lieutenant steps in to continue, or even improve upon, his master's work. A child or other relative vows revenge. A minion of the deceased villain takes his place, claiming to be the original back from the dead. Particularly if he has access to illusion magic, or if the villain always wore a great helm or mask, this isn't too difficult an impersonation to pull off. Or, to really disturb your players, drop hints that the great villain was simply the servant of an even greater power.

Don't take away every victory the PCs earn; that's more frustrating than never winning at all. Instead, use these techniques to save a campaign that might otherwise stall or end prematurely, or to begin a brand-new story. Use them sparingly even then. Having a single victory stripped away is motivation for greater efforts; having them all rendered meaningless is sure to inspire apathy.

The Soul-Locked Creature

If you really want to hammer home the notion that a particular creature is almost unkillable—or the fact that violence is not a winning solution—consider giving some of your monsters the soul-locked trait. This is something like a template, since it takes a preexisting monster and modifies it. It makes only a single change to the creature, however: namely, it cannot be killed under normal circumstances!

Soul-locking functions similarly to a ghost's rejuvenation ability. Whenever the creature dies, it makes a DC 16 level check (d20 + HD). If it succeeds, the creature returns to life—or undeath, or animation—4d20 days after being slain (or twice that if the body is completely destroyed, such as by *disintegrate* or immersion in lava). Each soul-locked creature has one specific way in which it can be dispatched permanently. In some cases, this might be a particular type of weapon, or even a specific weapon. In most instances, the creature can be permanently defeated only through indirect means. If the monster is the manifestation of a familial curse, it can be banished forever only by making amends for the sin that called the curse down on the family in the first place. If it's a demonic entity, the heroes must find the ancient symbols that drew it to the Material World and destroy them. If the beast is a creature of taint, the characters might have to cleanse an entire area of taint or lure the creature to a sacred purifying spring before it will stay dead.

Even though being soul-locked makes a creature almost impossible to permanently destroy, it does not increase the monster's Challenge Rating, since it is no harder to defeat the monster in any given encounter. You should give the PCs extra XP as a story award—perhaps an additional 25% over and above the XP for defeating it in that particular encounter—when they finally best it permanently.

In most campaigns, only one or at most two creatures should be soul-locked. If you're running a campaign in which violence is not a viable solution—such as a campaign in which violence deals taint—a great many creatures (or even all of them) can be soul-locked.

UNHAPPY ENDINGS

In most campaigns, players tend to assume—usually with good reason—that the end of the campaign is likely to be a happy one. Certainly bad luck and the occasional Total Party Kill (TPK) can interfere, but for the most part the end of the story is more or less a triumphant one.

Throw this idea out the window for horror campaigns. The story might end happily, the heroes having finally defeated the great evil and freed their lands from whatever terrors stalked them. On the other hand, the evil of the campaign might be undefeatable. The campaign might end with the PCs driven mad or overcome by taint. Perhaps they cannot destroy the foul demonic entity but can only sacrifice their lives to end the ritual calling it to the Material Plane.

An unhappy ending doesn't mean the PCs must lose or die. They can still have their victories and accomplishments—and should have, in fact, if the players aren't to feel frustrated or ill used—but those victories need not be complete. Consider a quest to retrieve a loved one from the clutches of a vampire lord. The heroes find him already undead, drained of life and raised as a slave to their enemy. They can destroy him, freeing his soul to travel on to the afterlife, but they cannot save him completely. He is lost to them.

Depending on your players, you might choose to warn them at the start of a horror campaign that the end might not

be pleasant. Doing this runs the risk of ruining the impact of the conclusion, and you need not do so if you feel your players will enjoy a bittersweet or dark ending. If you aren't certain, however, it's better to hint at what might come and be sure they can handle it than risk anger and disappointment later. Such a hint might reduce the power of the first horror campaign, but you can always run a second one without advance warning once you know they're amenable.

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: NIGHTWATCH

Presented here is a rough outline for a horror campaign, intended to provide you with a basic skeleton on which to construct your own ideas. It incorporates several varieties of horror, as well as substantial action and political intrigue.

In a city on the border of a great kingdom, the citizens are faced with a new and unrecognized threat. While they are accustomed to the occasional monster of the wilds attacking an outlying farm, they remain ignorant of the horror brewing within their midsts. The evil of an ancient shrine not far outside a major city has leeched into the environment, resulting in a wide and growing region of taint. Foul horrors are birthed in that miasma; undead and demons are drawn by its call. Crime rises in the streets of the city as the malevolence in the air inspires the citizens to dark acts of depravity. The law grows oppressive in its attempt to crack down on the crime wave. Corrupt demagogues, and perhaps even shapeshifters or possessing demons, rise to power in the government.

Not everyone is unaware of the spreading taint, however. A high priest, a druid of the wilds, and several of the ruling baron's knights recognize the growing threat. Uncertain who else to trust and unwilling to cause panic among the citizenry, they set out to stem the advancing tide of taint and quell the monsters who carry it with them.

They cannot do it alone.

PART ONE: A DECAYING CITY

The campaign begins with a game, or perhaps several, in which the PCs are unaware of the Nightwatch organization and the growing taint in the wilds. These first few stories revolve around encounters with various evils—perhaps rescuing a trade caravan from humanoids in the wilderness or clearing the city sewers of unnatural vermin. Eventually, the PCs discover the truth of the situation—that a growing number of monsters and people are infested with taint. They can discover Nightwatch on their own, because they and the organization are investigating the same monster, or the knights and high priest might track them down once it becomes clear that the PCs know what is happening in the region and oppose it. In any event, several games into the campaign, the heroes are inducted into the organization.

The next several games involve the PCs finding their footing within Nightwatch. The monsters are primarily urban—a vampire stalking the city's fashionable quarter, perhaps a doppelganger taking the place of an authority figure. The heroes also make enemies within the government when their investigations reveal corruption and criminal links to some officials. Some of the games should not involve taint directly, instead pitting the heroes against untainted monsters, local criminals, or other foes unrelated to the main plot. These account for roughly half of the stories in this portion. The PCs begin to uncover signs of a unifying force among some of these monsters, and evidence of a strange and violent religious cult they do not recognize.

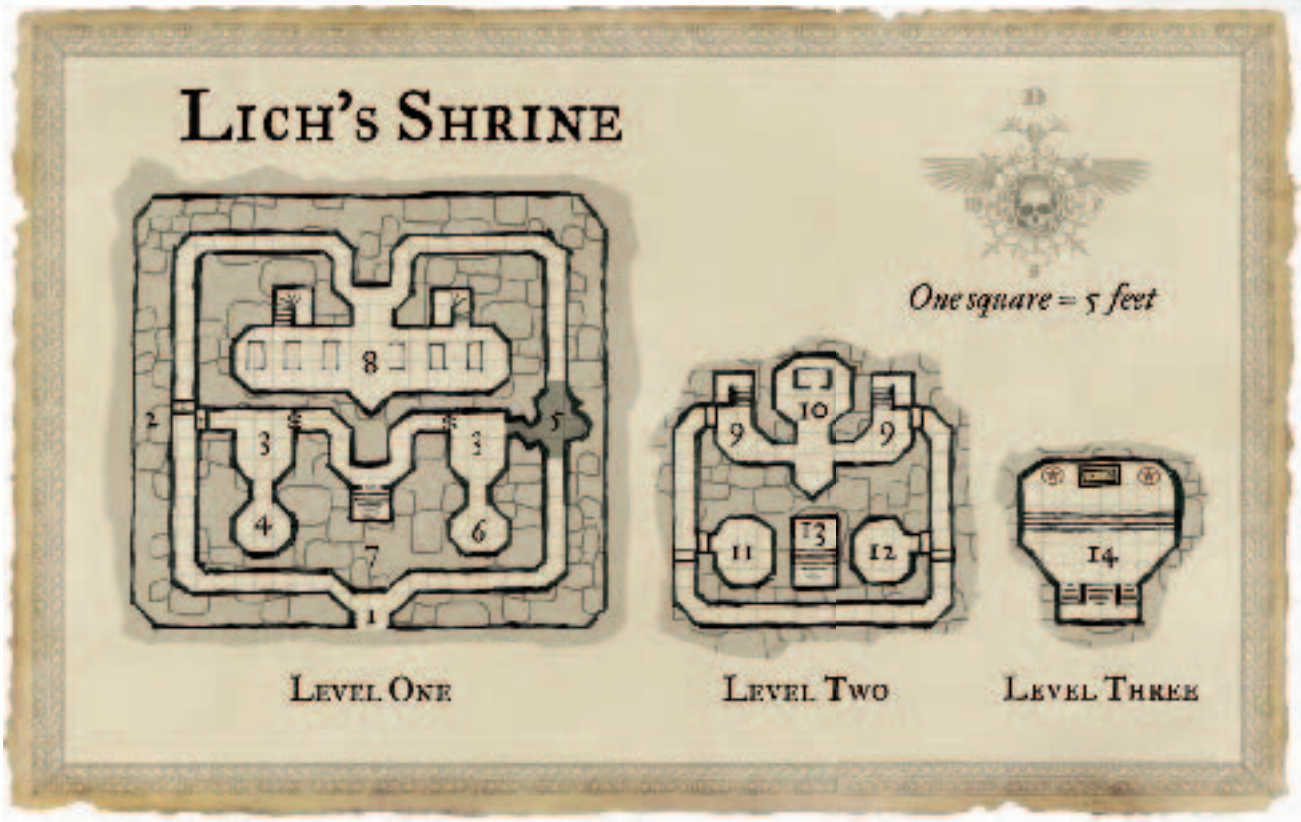
PART TWO: A TWISTED WILDERNESS

While dealing with increasing monstrous incursions in the city, the heroes eventually dig up information on the cult. They learn that it was devoted to an evil deity, one rarely worshiped in the modern age. (In the world of Greyhawk, Tharizdun is a viable choice. In Eberron, the Shadow fits the bill, as would a forgotten god of past empires. In the Forgotten Realms, Bhaal or Myrkul, both slain during the Time of Troubles, are appropriate.) Why it has become active again here is unclear, but the heroes eventually track one of its members, or one of the city's monsters, to a leader of the cult. In the various games it takes to accomplish this, many other operatives of Nightwatch are slain, and the number of monsters hiding in the city seems to grow ever greater. Crime reaches record levels, and several neighborhoods in the city itself develop taint. In the cultists' headquarters, the heroes are attacked by what seem to be disembodied tendrils of evil and rage. These are actually small taint elementals (see page 145), although they should never be identified as such.

From the local cult leader, or from studying his writings, they learn that the cult intends to bring forth their god, to manifest him on the Material Plane. They also learn of a shrine hidden somewhere in the wilds. If they do not themselves think to locate this shrine and determine if it is the source of the taint, one of the Nightwatch founders suggests it.

The campaign shifts to the wilderness, where the PCs must somehow locate the ancient shrine. In their explorations, they must survive regions of heavy taint and interact with small villages throughout the area—some of which have fallen to taint or tainted monsters, others of which struggle to survive. The monsters here are often larger and far less subtle than those in the city. More than once, particularly in regions of heavy taint, nature itself seems to turn against them; animals attack for no good reason; the weather turns foul and unnatural. While the majority of plotlines should be devoted to the hunt for the shrine, several should be independent, and each should have a solid starting and ending point. For instance, one story might revolve around saving a village from taint and a pack of tainted ghouls, another around a demon possessing each of the PCs in turn and attacking other travelers, and a third around simply surviving a massive storm that seems to deliberately target the heroes with rain, hail, and lightning.

The region immediately surrounding the shrine is so heavily tainted that the physical world has changed. Animals and plants are twisted and alien. Tentacled horrors (perhaps larger taint elementals) reach from the shadows, rocks gibber insanely, the earth bleeds, the rivers run with pus. The mighty unicorn who once guarded these woods is a vicious, predatory thing, wanting only to kill. The skies open and rain burning hail, and each hailstone is an eye belonging to some otherworldly god. The heroes might even be driven somewhat mad by the combination of taint and an inability to fully comprehend what they see.



PART THREE: LICH'S SHRINE

Eventually the PCs uncover the shrine itself, occupied by a clerical lich—a servant of the shrine's deity who still retains his power. The map above depicts the shrine. Choose traps and select creatures to populate the shrine based on the level of the PCs when they enter the shrine; suggestings are given in the key below. The lich should be a level or two higher than the PCs, so its Challenge Rating is three or four levels higher than the average party level.

This shrine is suffused with taint: Any creature entering the shrine must make a DC 30 Fortitude save. Those who fail their saving throw have their corruption score increased by 1d3 points.

Level One

1. Entryway. The entrance is warded with a magic trap, chosen from Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

2. The doors here are locked. The space just past the northern door contains a pit trap.

3. Supplication and mortification chambers.

4. Vault. One or more undead creatures are here. If you have *Libris Mortis*, consider using one or more blasphemes (CR 9); otherwise, use bodaks (CR 8) or other undead.

5. Collapsed ceiling. The passage here is impassible.

6. Vault. As in area 4, one or more undead creatures are here. If you have *Libris Mortis*, use one or more slaughter wights (CR 8); otherwise, use mohrgs (CR 8) or other undead.

7. Stairs down through area 13 to area 14 on level three. These stairs pass through level two without allowing access.

8. This chamber contains six sarcophagi and a number of ghouls, ghasts, or similar undead. The stairs leading out of this room lead down to area 9 on level two.

Level Two

All doors on this level are trapped with poisoned needles or blades.

9. Stairs up to area 8 on level one.

10. False Shrine. An undead creature other than the lich the PCs seek is here, serving as a decoy. If you are using *Libris Mortis*, use a gravetouched ghoul cleric. Otherwise, consider an advanced mummy.

11. This storage room holds various religious accoutrements and symbols.

12. This storage room is similar to area 11 but also contains a few minor magic items. In addition, the room is haunted (see Haunted Sites on page 71).

13. These stairs lead from area 7 on level one to area 14 on level three; they are inaccessible from the rest of level two.

Level Three

14. True Shrine. The northern section is a raised platform holding an *unhallowed* altar, vile statues, and the clerical lich who dwells here. The leftmost statue functions as a *teleportation circle* to the false shrine at area 10.

If the PCs can defeat the lich, they find evidence that it has been in communication with someone from Nightwatch. They must face the fact that someone in their organization is a traitor.

PART FOUR: A TRAITOROUS HEART

The heroes return to the city, despite many difficulties on the way. Destroying the lich (and possibly the shrine) prevents the taint from spreading any further, but it will take many years before the existing taint begins to fade. When they return, they find Nightwatch on the verge of public exposure.

Within its shrine,
the lich awaits

The city's nobles have learned of it, and most seem convinced that it is an insurgent organization, perhaps even responsible for the horrors that have plagued the city. The PCs must continue to thwart the activities of various monsters and criminals while withstanding the political machinations of several important people who wish to see Nightwatch and all its members destroyed. During all this, a traitor still lurks within the organization.

The PCs must survive several assassination attempts, often in the midst of other difficult tasks. Eventually, perhaps by taking an assassin alive and questioning him, they learn who the traitor is. The precise identity is left to the DM. It should be one of the founders—the druid, the priest, or one of the knights—and it should be someone the PCs trusted. Now that they know this, they can follow or investigate the traitor and learn that he is in cahoots with several of the nobles who have been calling for the destruction of Nightwatch and the arrest of its members. One of the nobles belongs to the cult and intends to rule the city and restore worship of his forgotten master. He believes that the monsters (many of which either worked for or were unleashed by him) and taint will ultimately destroy all law and order, allowing him to rule. The traitor is aiding him in exchange for power and riches once this comes to pass. He cooperated in the formation of Nightwatch so that he might keep an eye on those who would thwart his ally's plans, and so that all the town's potential heroes would gather in one place as easy targets. It was he who tipped off the assassins where to find and kill the members of Nightwatch who have fallen.

Slaying the noble and the corrupt Nightwatch founder is not the end of the story. Doing so triggers the rite they have been building for months, summoning *something* into the Material World. Whether it is truly an aspect of their god or merely evil made manifest, it appears as a mighty taint elemental (perhaps the source of the various disembodied tentacles the PCs faced earlier), formed of tendrils of sheer malevolence that assault the PCs, and all others nearby, from multiple angles.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Even once the PCs have exposed the traitor and the cultist noble, their troubles are far from over. Much of the region around the city is still tainted, and monsters haunt the wilds. Corruption infects much of the city government, and Nightwatch is in shambles, with many of its members dead and one of its founders revealed as a traitor. Whether the PCs decide to help reform the organization, attempt to protect the city on their own, or choose some other course of action could determine the starting point for a brand-new campaign.

OTHER CAMPAIGN MODELS

In addition to the Nightwatch campaign model, any of the following concepts (or several used in conjunction) can form the basis for a long-running horror campaign.

THE TOUCH OF TAINT

In this campaign, nearly all monsters—at least those of the aberration, dragon, magical beast, and monstrous humanoid types—are the result of taint. When a creature dies of taint, it might instead rise as a monster of similar physical nature. The first cockatrice sprang from the remains of a tainted rooster. The gryphon might have risen from a tainted region in which a horse and an eagle both lay dying and decayed. Driders resulted from a mass of tainted spiders consuming a drow or an elf. Centaurs could come from a horse and rider growing tainted and dying together or might actually be the result of crossbreeding inspired by depravity and made possible by corruption.

In a campaign of this kind, all such creatures have a taint score equal to one-half their Charisma score (minimum 1). Creatures of the evil subtype use their entire Charisma score.

THE FATHER OF MONSTERS

In many mythologies, the ancestry of a great many monsters can be traced back to a single source. In Greek myth, for instance, most of the monsters battled by various heroes—at least, those not created by the gods themselves—were the offspring of Typhon and Echidna; in Norse myth, some of the most fearsome monsters were children of Loki. A campaign built around this concept might trace all monsters to a specific deity, or ascribe all monsters of a particular type to the experiments of a mad archmage or a demon prince. It's possible that slaying the progenitor would weaken the others, or at least prevent any further monsters of that sort from being born.

DEATH IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

Nonhumanoid monsters are extremely rare in this campaign, and each is likely unique. Perhaps they are the results of the gods' anger or of curses or foul magical experimentation. Whatever the case, each one is practically impossible to kill; every monster is considered soul-locked (see page 47). Only those with the skills and fortitude to investigate each monster and determine what methods can be used to permanently eliminate it can hope to rid the region of the beasts that terrorize it.

CONJUNCTION

The campaign world has come into conjunction with some other plane. It can be a lower plane, an alien world such as the Far Realm, the world of dreams (such as Eberron's Dal Quor), or even an alternate Material Plane wherein the creatures and laws of reality differ. Taint or other mystical forces leak into the world through the point of connection, and many alien creatures—perhaps most of the campaign's monsters—are intruders from the other realm. The campaign might revolve around the heroes searching for a means of strengthening the barriers and ending the conjunction, or it might simply focus on their quest to adapt and survive in an ever-changing world.

THE EVIL THAT MEN DO

A campaign of this nature focuses on human/humanoid villains. Monsters either do not exist or exist only as pawns in the schemes of humanoid villains. Suitable kinds of monsters would be constructs, mindless undead, and summoned entities. This type of campaign is a drastic departure from standard D&D, but that can make it all the more horrific, since the villains are not easily identifiable and the occasional monster that does appear is entirely unexpected.

Illus. by W. Reynolds

Illus. by R. Gallegos

Sometimes the worst evil isn't supernatural at all

IN OVER THEIR HEADS

The PCs do not start the campaign as great heroes, but rather as normal people—blacksmiths, farmers, apprentices, and the like—who are drawn into horrific events beyond their control. The PCs begin with levels in NPC classes. Only after they have been brought face to face with the monsters that lurk in the darkness do they rise to the occasion and begin gaining levels in adventuring classes. In such a campaign, members of adventuring classes might be exceptionally rare, making the PCs (and villains) practically unique.

DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

Dreams and nightmares have always played a large part in horror and fantasy. From prophetic visions to horrifying night terrors, from alien creatures that invade the sleeping mind to simple daytime worries wrapped in symbolic cloaks, the tapestry of dreams can be woven into almost any story. When sprinkled into the story only where appropriate, dreams can be a powerful tool for evoking fear and moving the plot forward.

While much of this section is devoted to using dreams as plot devices or even settings, they can be used simply to explore the emotions (particularly but not exclusively the fears) of the PCs. In the hands of experienced roleplayers, this is an invaluable tool. If you simply describe to the players a few dreams their characters have over the course of an adventure or campaign, being certain to include details that are not obvious references to ongoing events; the players can take it upon themselves to determine what these dreams mean from their characters' perspective. You might decide to let a player dictate his character's dreams (or at least those that have no bearing on the plot). For example, tell the player that his character has had a horrific nightmare, and then ask the player to describe the dream for you rather than vice versa. (Some players might not enjoy being put on the spot, so consider allowing them time between games to come up with this.) This technique encourages the player to give some thought to his character's goals, fears, and thought processes. It also offers you knowledge of the character's fears—information that you can put to use later in the campaign.

CONSTRUCTING DREAMS

It's a common misperception among DMs and authors that all it takes to create a dream sequence is to describe random weirdness and some nonsense imagery. In fact, the majority of dreams contain their own form of logic and their own patterns, even if these are not easily recognizable. To create an in-game dream that feels genuine, it's important to construct the scene properly.

Making Events Feel Dreamlike

If you want to make a scene feel like a genuine dream, subtlety is your best tool. Dreams tend to feel quite real—at least at first. Consider the following possibilities, and keep in mind that everyone in the dream treats the situation as though it were totally normal.

Everything is Normal but for One Major Detail: The PCs are no longer the same race they were. Everyone is speaking a different language. A character has forgotten how to wield a sword or cast spells. A person long dead is speaking to the character as though he had never died. The character's companions have no eyes.

Things Change Abruptly: The dreamer looks away and when he looks back, he's speaking to a different person than he was a moment ago. The house the dreamer just entered is a castle on the inside. The door leading out of the character's bedroom actually opens into a forest halfway across the continent. Perhaps the dreamer himself changes identities in the dream; first he is watching or speaking to someone, then he *is* that person and feels as though he always has been. Or the dreamer rolls over in bed to speak to his wife and discovers a bare and bloody skull staring back at him with horror-filled eyes.

Items and Places Evoke the Wrong Emotion: A favorite childhood toy seems to glare evilly at the character. The halls of his home are unfamiliar. His favorite tune is depressing to hear, bringing tears of sorrow to his eyes. The sight of his lover fills him with mindless rage.

People's Behavior is Slightly Off: A loved one hurts the character in some way and, when confronted, dismisses his feelings as unimportant. A trusted ally lies to the dreamer but otherwise acts normally. A parent is cruel and taunting. A friend well known for his jokes and pranks seems to lack all sense of humor. A frail, spindly wizard insists on laying into foes with an axe.

A Ridiculous Detail is Accepted as Commonplace: Dogs talk. The dreamer fights his foes with an empty hand, as though pretending to use a sword; each time he strikes, it takes the foe a second longer to drop, and the dreamer knows that sooner or later, the enemy will realize he doesn't really have a sword and will stop falling altogether. It is always day or always night. Time flows abnormally quickly or slows to a crawl.

The Dreamer Recognizes a Person or Place for Something It's Not: The dreamer is walking with his wife, but in the dream his wife looks like a totally different person. The dreamer is wandering through his family's home; he knows it's his home and knows his way around it, but it does not actually resemble his family's home from real life.

The DM can choose to revisit a place the PC has been to earlier in the campaign. Start by telling the player, "You find yourself back in Castle Shadowmere." Then describe rooms and halls as you choose, making no attempt to have the description match up to the PC's earlier visit but not calling attention to the differences either. Wait for the player to notice that the location does not appear the same, rather than making that fact overtly clear.

Turning Dreams into Nightmares

The techniques for running horror encounters and games, as presented in Chapters 1 through 3, apply equally well to turning dreams into nightmares. So long as you start from a sufficiently dreamlike starting point, perhaps using the above techniques, the nightmare should maintain its unreal quality while still evoking as much dread as any other horror encounter.

DREAMS AS PLOT DEVICES

So what to do with dreams in a horror game? Certainly they're interesting enough to include simply for the sake of character development, but that's hardly the only use for them. Besides contributing greatly to the mood, dreams can have a major impact on the plot of a story.

Prophetic Dreams

Common to myth, modern fantasy, horror, and even certain real-world spiritual beliefs is the notion of dreams that somehow predict the future. Working prophetic dreams into a game is simply a matter of describing a character's dream and letting the players figure out on their own that it was a forewarning of things to come. You might decide these dreams are warnings from a deity, or the work of a long dead but still concerned relative, but they need have no source at all. In a world of high magic, which covers most D&D settings, such things simply occur. Use them to enhance the mood of a story, or when you wish to give the characters an opportunity to prepare themselves for something that would otherwise catch them unawares.

Omens: Omens in dreams are symbols and metaphors; they foretell the future, but they aren't obvious about it and require some interpretation. For instance, if a character dreams of falling to the ground amid a pool of blood, this probably suggests that he will be badly injured or even slain in the near future. It does not, however, tell him how or when. And it might not even indicate literal injury. It could instead suggest that the character is going to fail at something.

On a more symbolic level, a character might dream of a raven attacking a lion—slashing its talons across the lion's throat, pecking out the eyes, and feasting on the corpse. This dream seems meaningless—until the character later realizes that the orcs that are about to invade his kingdom are united under a raven banner. And the king's ensign is a rearing lion. . . .

Omens are relatively easy to work with, as far as prophetic dreams go. You just need to rough out a few events likely to occur later in the campaign and take a moment beforehand to couch them in vague, symbolic terms. After all, the interpretation is up to the PCs. If they guess wrong, they can't expect to recognize the event when it happens. You can, if necessary, tailor the event to better fit the symbolism or their interpretation of it, if this would produce more interesting results than your initial plan.

Clear Visions: A far more difficult type of prophetic dream to pull off, a clear vision isn't couched in metaphor. It clearly shows a future event. A dreamer might see himself riding through a specific valley, only to be ambushed by troglodytes and taken to a sacrificial chamber, where he is fed, piece by living piece, to a horrific demon. Or he might find himself on a battlefield, in the midst of unthinkable carnage, watching as his fellow soldiers and even his queen fall one by one to the enemy, until he eventually becomes buried and suffocated beneath a pile of dead companions.

A clear vision is a tool for inspiring dread in your players. If you have described in great detail a dream in which each of them was picked off by an unseen opponent while walking down an ornately decorated underground hall, rest assured that when your players recognize that hall during a dungeon crawl five sessions later, they're going to be very, very worried. Such a dream enables you to drop hints to your players about the nature of threats they might face, particularly if the foe has only one specific weakness. (Even in an otherwise clear dream, you might wish to couch that weakness in symbolic terms so as not to make it too easy on them.) It even allows you to play up a villain to the extent that your PCs might be reluctant to face him—despite the possibility that he might not actually be as dangerous as they believe.

The danger in placing clear prophecies in dreams, of course, is that the players might not act as the DM anticipates. What if the PCs decide not to enter that valley? What if they manage to find a way of averting the war with the orcs, or they never go down that corridor and thus skip that portion of the dungeon? While you can design the adventure to encourage PCs to go a certain way, forcing them to do so only results in frustration and resentment.

Fall back on creative description and flexible placement to make prophecies work in some way other than what you originally intended. Save the description of the valley that the PCs did not enter and use it on the next valley they pass through. Tell them once they're inside that it's starting to seem familiar. Maybe they succeed in averting the war for now, but it flares up again several years down the road (possibly even in a different campaign). Perhaps the symbols on the dungeon hallway are the mark of a cult that could just as easily pop up again elsewhere.

On the other hand, sometimes it's appropriate to let the prophecy go unfulfilled. After all, the characters had advance warning, so maybe some action they took headed off the event before it could happen. It should not be possible to avert every prophesied happening—horror and fantasy are rife with examples of people trying to escape their fate and bringing it down upon themselves all the harder (for a classic

example, see *Oedipus Rex*)—but the players should not be pushed into fatalism. Their efforts should sometimes pay off, and it should sometimes be possible to escape the doom laid out for them.

Another way to wrap up loose ends left by players making unanticipated moves is to send the character a follow-up dream. They negotiate a peace treaty instead of drubbing a nearby kingdom? Let one of them dream again of battlefield horrors, but this time after repeating the first few moments of the earlier dream the warriors' swords turn to crystal and shatter to sand, while the arrow fletches sprout into white geese that fly up and away into the clear sky. If a character received a dream of a shadow-infested swamp and a fatal ambush therein but the PCs take the knowledge to heart and bypasses the swamp altogether, send the character a dream of a mysterious entity that demands acknowledgement of the warning it provided.

False Prophecies: A character who often receives prophetic dreams might become the target of malevolent entities—evil wizards, demons, dream creatures, even gods—who fear his ability to glimpse the future. They might react by sending dreams of their own, dreams that appear to be prophetic but are in fact intended to lead the character into unanticipated danger.

The DM should allow some possibility for the dreamer to detect the false dream. Perhaps all his prophetic dreams involve the same character or image, which this one lacks; or perhaps that image seems somehow flawed. For instance, a character's prophetic dreams might always involve some sense of his god's presence, or they might always include his deceased lover somewhere in them, as though he was showing him the way. In the false dream, that sense of presence is gone or the lover seems somehow different. The clues should not be obvious, but they should be detectable by an observant player.

Torment and Retribution

Nightmares serve very well as the punishment bestowed by a curse, as the sign of a god's displeasure, or as a source of supernatural torment. Characters wake up screaming, their worst fears yanked to the forefront of their minds and overlaid with even more horrible images inspired by the source of the nightmares.

A character who regularly suffers nightmares—not now and again, or even once or twice a week, but on a nightly basis—is incapable of getting any real rest. Until he can find some way to lift the curse or appease the entity bestowing the nightmares, he cannot recover arcane spells. After a number of days equal to his Constitution modifier (minimum 1), the character is fatigued constantly. After two weeks plus a number of days equal to his Constitution modifier, the character is exhausted constantly. For every day beyond this point that the character cannot escape the nightmares, he risks damage to his very sanity. After each additional night of nightmares, he must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + 1 per night over two weeks) to avoid having his depravity score increase by 1. For more on depravity, see Mental Symptoms on page 65.

Escaping the nightmares might be as simple as finding a magical means of removing a curse, or as complex as making amends to the individual or deity who bestowed that curse in the first place. You should not make it too hard to learn the source of the nightmares, because actually escaping from them might itself take quite a bit of time.

Alternatively, a curse or punishment might involve a limited number of nightmares rather than an ongoing plague. If the bestowing entity is powerful enough, the events of these nightmares might bleed over into reality—for example, the character might take actual wounds if he is injured in the dream. If you prefer that dreams deal mental damage only, the character takes 1 point of Wisdom or Charisma damage for every 10 points of damage dealt within the nightmare. If he reaches 0 in either, he begins to go mad (see above).

Bestowing this sort of nightmare requires an extremely potent force, such as a deity or perhaps a caster with access to *wish* or *miracle*.

Dreams as Messages

Not all dreams sent by gods or higher powers need be nightmares sent as punishment. Heroes of myth and fiction often receive instructions, or even calls for aid, from those they serve. And of course *dream* and similar spells allow any reasonably powerful spellcaster to send a message to anyone with whom he is familiar. The message might be blatant, or it might be cloaked in cryptic symbolism. Of course, an enemy spellcaster or malevolent entity might send false messages, hoping to mislead the dreamer into taking some action he would not normally do.

Situational Dreams or Nightmares

Consider highlighting some aspect of the characters' current circumstances by tying it into a character's dreams or nightmares. In this case, the dream is not itself a plot point but enhances the emotional impact of the coming events. For instance, describing dreams of battle and violence the night before the PCs anticipate a difficult struggle is thematically appropriate. If the dreams contain enough imagery to suggest that they might be prophetic (even if they were not intended to be predictive), they can go still further in readying the players for the welter of emotions soon to come.

Specific locations can also trigger nightmares. An abandoned mansion or darkened forest might be sufficient in their own right to cause night terrors. If the region is tainted, haunted, or otherwise a place of unnatural energies, those nightmares might not be entirely natural in origin. PCs could find themselves experiencing other people's fears and memories, or performing actions that even their darkest subconscious would never stoop to. A sufficiently vivid nightmare inspired by taint might actually cause madness or deal taint due to actions taken in the dream. Such dreams are likely to return on a nightly basis until the heroes either depart or succeed in cleansing the area of unnatural energies. If they stay more than a few days without cleansing the area, their constant nightmares can lead them to take the penalties described under Torment and Retribution (see above).

ADVENTURING IN NIGHTMARE REALMS

Dreamscapes allow for more than exploring a character's fears or showing the future. They're viable locations for adventure as well.

In some myths and cosmologies, the realm of dreams is an actual place, a strange world visited by the sleeping minds of billions of dreamers across millions of worlds. In other settings, no unified realm of dreams exists; instead each dream creates its own temporary reality, one that others can actually

enter with the proper magic. In still others, dreams might be nothing more than images created within a character's mind—but even then, magic can allow others entry, permitting them to move through the subject's thoughts as they are made manifest in the dream. You should decide in advance whether each dream is its own contained realm or whether explorers can access an entire plane of dreams by traveling beyond the borders of a given sleeper's mind.

If you wish to run an adventure in a nightmare realm, you must determine precisely how the characters arrive there.

Normal Dream or Actual Dreamscape: If you are running a scene that takes place in a normal dream, the events have little bearing on the real world. All injuries are gone when the character awakens, and he might not even fully remember what transpired—just like in a normal dream. You can take the opportunity to really let loose, allowing low-level characters access to high-level abilities, having kobolds transform into dragons, making all monsters regenerate body parts like hydras regrow heads, and so forth. Alternatively, the characters might have stumbled into a dreamscape, a realm of dreams where actions have consequences in the waking world (see below). Decide if each dream is its own demiplane, unconnected to anything else, or if all dreams border on a true plane of dreams, allowing travelers to wander from one dream to another, or even enter a realm of raw dream-stuff that belongs to no single being.

Bear in mind that even in a normal dream, certain creatures of the dream realm can cause lasting injuries and effects. Their mere presence can transform an otherwise standard dream into a nightmare realm. See page 58 for more on creatures of the dreamscape.

Physical or Mental Entry: Do the PCs enter the dream purely as mental manifestations of themselves, or do they enter it physically, just as they would enter any other alternate plane? If they physically enter a dreamland, they risk injury and death. Even if the foe is a product of a dreamer's imagination, so long as the PCs inhabit its reality its claws or blades or spells are very real. A character who enters a nightmare land mentally (like a character projecting an astral body into the Astral Plane) cannot be physically injured in the dream world, under most circumstances. However, in such as case you might rule that the PC lacks his standard equipment, since that is part of his physical self. He might look different, as his self-image asserts itself. Decide in advance how dangerous the realm will be—if characters slain in the dreamscape simply return to their physical bodies, if they return with mental damage (perhaps Wisdom or Charisma damage, or madness), or if they die from the shock of the experience.

Deliberate or Accidental Entry: Did the PCs choose to enter the realm of dreams? Did they participate in a *plane shift* spell or some great ritual, perhaps seeking hidden secrets or the soul of a lost comrade who will not awaken? Or were they drawn in by accident? Perhaps a dreaming character finds himself in a strange landscape from which he cannot escape, and his companions are in fact manifestations of his own mind. Or perhaps an entire party, camped in an area of unstable magic or the abandoned temple of a forgotten deity, experiences the same dream and must accomplish some task in the realm of nightmare before they will be allowed to awaken. More often than not, deliberate entry will be physical, while accidental entry will be mental only, though this is merely a guideline, not a rule.

Knowing or Unknowing Entry: Do the characters even know they are in a dreamscape or nightmare realm? If they all went to sleep and found themselves there, they might naturally be inclined to think it's just a dream. On the other hand, they might believe themselves to have been somehow transported during the night to an unfamiliar but real place. Characters who set out to enter the realm of dreams most assuredly know where they are, at least in general terms, but characters who were transported against their will or stumbled through a strange portal might believe themselves in some alien plane rather than in the realm of dreams.

Terrain, Environment, and Inhabitants

The environment of a dreamscape can shift from absolutely normal to utterly surreal and horrific in an instant. Just like the ebb and flow of a dream itself, a nightmare realm follows its own logic and patterns, but these often bear little or no resemblance to the logic of the real world.

Just as every dream is unique, so too is every nightmare realm; it would be impossible to provide a specific list or formula for creating them. Rather, you should make use of the techniques discussed above and apply them to the actual environment through which the PCs adventure. Objects and places alter when the PCs look away. If characters enter one structure, they wind up in a different one. People abruptly change their behavior or warp to become other creatures. Horrific monsters come from nowhere, appearing behind the PCs when they aren't paying attention.

If possible, design encounters and situations to take full advantage of known fears and weaknesses of the PCs. A character who fears reptiles confronts snakes on a regular basis: They are in his pack, clothes, hair, mouth; the monster lurking in the nearby bog is a snake-headed hydra. Another character, who had been unable to save his family from being slaughtered by drow long ago, now finds bloodied toys and clothes and eventually confronts his relatives themselves, furious over his failure to protect them.

Locations in the nightmare realm should seem frightening and eerie. An old house, perhaps the childhood home of a PC, contains more rooms than it should, and halls that do not lead to the same place twice. Geographical impossibilities are commonplace—mountains with convoluted shapes that could not possibly support themselves; tropical forests in the midst of frozen tundra; islands floating in an infinite, storm-filled sky; graveyards that stretch for miles with no nearby community to have established them; weather that shifts from one extreme to another with no warning. At the same time, vast stretches of land are entirely normal, making the intrusion of the impossible that much more jarring. Even normal regions are exaggerated, though. Deserts stretch as far as the eye can see, motionless save for the hot wind that ruffles the dunes. The fields around a homey cottage are brilliant green, bedecked with daffodils and frolicking animals (until the daffodils seize upon the frolickers with sucker-mouths and darken the grass with their blood). Rain falls in torrential sheets that are solid obstacles. Juxtaposition of the normal with the extreme, and the casual blending of these with the impossible, are the keys to making a dreamscape.

Where possible, tie the terrain and environment to the perceived thoughts and emotions of the PCs. If they are angry or spoiling for a fight, the weather could grow violent. Characters

feeling as though they might never reach their goals find deserts and mountains blocking their path. Those feeling homesick or wishing for a place of rest could stumble across the cottage described above. The emotions of the players or characters should never define a nightmare realm (or a given encounter within it), but using them as a springboard adds a layer of depth and verisimilitude to the game. Similarly, items, creatures, and people in the nightmare realm might also stem from the characters' memories and feelings. An old and hated villain might appear, even if he has long since been slain. Phobias rear their heads with stubborn persistence. A missed loved one approaches a character, begging him to run off with him or accusing him of some bitter betrayal. Remember, too, to include imagery and metaphor; a character's loves, hopes, or fears might not always manifest in obvious ways. Fear of abandonment might manifest as the character seeming invisible and inaudible to potential allies; sharing a cramped cave with a member of the opposite sex to whom a character is attracted is a pretty blatant metaphor.

People change abruptly and frequently in dreams, and this is not a phenomenon you need limit to NPCs. In nightmare realms, the PCs can find themselves or their companions changing abruptly. You might determine that a specific character suddenly looks very different, and inform all players but the one playing that character of the fact. Special class features such as turn undead or empathic link might begin to work differently or not at all.

It could be an enjoyable departure for you to prepare a new set of characters, of roughly the same level as the PCs, and hand each player a new character at some point as they travel the nightmare lands. The PCs could continue to be the same people they always were in terms of memory and personality but very different physically. Have the players swap characters briefly. Let them take

Finding the path through a dreamscape can be a nightmare in itself

over the monsters or villains in a fight, as the perspective of the dream shifts. If they're up to the roleplaying challenge, let them know that their alignment, or a similarly important aspect of their personality, has changed temporarily.

It is up to you to balance the strangeness of the realm with the enjoyment of the players. Some people dislike being told, even on a temporary basis, that they must play their characters differently. Others do not take well to having some of their class features stripped away—again, even on a temporary basis. Make use of such techniques only if you feel your group will appreciate them. (See Chapter 1 for more on the DM/player agreement necessary to run a viable horror campaign.) Nightmare lands are far more effective as adventuring regions if the players have created fairly deep characters who have recognizable fears and goals and well-established backgrounds.

Spells in the Dreamscape

Due to the unpredictable nature of nightmare realms and dreams, any spells or spell-like abilities used therein might not work normally. The more complex the spell, the greater the chance it will go wrong. Each time a character casts a spell, roll 1d20 + the spell level. If the result is 21 or over, the spell is twisted by the mutable nature of the nightmare realm. Roll 1d20 again and consult the following table to determine the impact on the spell.

d20	Result
1–5	The spell functions normally but is cosmetically changed (different colors, flashing lights, odd sounds, and so on).
6–7	The spell functions as 1d4 caster levels lower than normal.
8–9	The spell functions as 1d4 caster levels higher than normal.
10–11	The spell functions normally, but affects a target or area other than the one the caster intended, determined randomly.
12–13	The spell does not function; instead, the caster produces another spell of the same level, determined randomly; this need not be a spell the caster knows or has prepared.
14–15	The spell does not function; instead, the caster produces another spell of 1d4 levels lower, determined randomly; this need not be a spell the caster knows or has prepared.
16–17	The spell does not function; instead, the caster produces another spell of 1d4 levels higher, determined randomly; this need not be a spell the caster knows or has prepared.
18–19	The spell simply fails to materialize.
20	Roll twice, ignoring this result if rolled again.

Injury and Death

Unlike normal dreams, actual adventuring in nightmare realms can threaten lasting repercussions for the characters who attempt it. (If the threat of injury and death is not real, the characters are unlikely to feel much fear.) This is not an issue if the characters traveled physically into the dreamscape, in which case they are present, body and soul, and every injury they take is entirely genuine.

If the characters have entered the nightmare realm mentally or spiritually, however, determining real-world consequences becomes trickier. The easiest solution is simply to have wounds and injuries carry over as normal. This is functional enough, but it reduces the sense of unreality of the dream, as well as blurring the difference between physical and mental travel.

A better solution is to have characters take mental damage that corresponds to the physical damage they take while in the nightmare realm. Some options include the following:

- When the character emerges from the nightmare realm, divide his total amount of hit point damage by his level. He takes this many points of Wisdom and Charisma damage (minimum 1), divided as equally as possible between both abilities. Even if the character has healed all the damage he took in the nightmare realm before exiting it, he still takes a single point of Charisma damage if he took any wounds at all during the course of his stay there.
- When the character emerges from the nightmare realm, divide his total amount of hit point damage by his level. Add 10 to this total. This is the DC of the Will save the character must make to avoid having his depravity score increase by 1 (see page 65 for more about depravity).

Characters who "die" while mentally traveling in a nightmare realm might experience one of several fates. Death in the dreamscape can simply result in death to the body as well, due to the mental shock. Alternatively, dying in the nightmare realm might result in the character losing a level or two, as portions of his memories are shredded away. Similarly, such a dream-death might result in permanent damage (2 or 4 points) to Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma. Decide ahead of time which option you prefer for your campaign.

If a character's body is slain in the "real" world while his mental or spiritual self is in the nightmare realm, he becomes trapped in the world of that dream. He can survive indefinitely but can never leave that particular realm. If he is slain within the nightmare realm as well, he dies and moves on to the appropriate afterlife.

Finally, if the PCs are traveling through the dream of a particular character, what happens if that individual should awaken before they depart? The easiest answer is that the characters instantly return to their waking bodies, perhaps stunned by the experience. Alternatively, they might be trapped until he sleeps again, or banished from his dreams to the wider dreamscape, wandering amid the dreams and nightmares of hundreds of beings as they search for a means of return. Or the dreamscape might be unaffected; if this is a realm the sleeper's soul visits at night, as opposed to one his brain creates, it might persist even while he is awake, simply waiting for him to return.

Why Use Nightmare Realms?

Surely a campaign world has sufficient regions in which to adventure, dark alleys to explore, terrifying shadowed forests in which to get lost. Why use nightmare realms at all?

Nightmares allow a DM to bring fear and horror techniques into play that might not be appropriate for the main campaign setting. You can make effective use of the PCs' fears without having to explain how the villain knew enough to exploit them. You can involve great monsters or environment-altering effects without having to account for their ecological impact across the region. Best of all, it allows you to exercise your descriptive muscle when it comes to the truly bizarre. No matter how well the players might know the campaign setting, they honestly have no idea what to expect in a dreamscape. They cannot even count on the laws of magic or reality remaining constant, nor on the relationship between cause and effect.

Illus. by M. Phillippi

You can take the players to all manner of exotic locations, unleash obscure monsters, explore alien cultures—none of which might be possible in a given campaign setting. Each nightmare realm is its own little demiplane, one where you can do almost anything without having to account for it later. You can delve deeply into the thoughts and secret wishes of a particular character or NPC, basing a detailed dreamscape on his fears and desires

Because these nightmare realms are actual dimensions, at least in some interpretations of the cosmology, they can be handled like any other plane. A character who constantly dreams of a castle silhouetted against the horizon, no matter what else is occurring in his dream, might be trying to tell himself something subconsciously—or he might be witnessing an actual castle, built in his own dreamscape by a plane-traveling wizard seeking a place to dwell in perfect isolation. Another character, who dreams of pulling a sword from the mouth of a silver dragon, might be surprised to find that the sword is more than just a manifestation of his thoughts and memories—it's an ancient artifact, hidden away in the nightmare realms long ago, that has somehow made its way into his region of the dreamscape. If he could travel to his dreamscape physically, he could retrieve it and bring it back to the real world.

DREAM MAGIC

A few rare spellcasters have focused their talents on the art known as oneiromancy. This discipline is represented by a handful of new spells and feats, rather than a prestige class or wizard specialization. For a full description of dream-related feats (Dreamtelling, Oneiromancy, and Improved Oneiromancy) and oneiromancy spells, see Chapter 5.

MONSTERS OF THE DREAMSCAPE

All manner of creatures can be encountered in a nightmare realm. Any monster a character has ever seen, or even heard of, can appear in his dreams. If you determine that dreams encroach on an actual extraplanar realm, then anything anyone has ever dreamed can exist in the dreamscape and can thus make its way into anyone's dreams. Every monster that exists in the real world—and many that exist only in fevered imagination or the subconscious mind—can manifest here.

Lurking deep within the alien, impossible landscapes of the realm of dreams, however, are some creatures that are not the products of a dreamer's mind. These horrors were not dreamed into existence but are natives of the dreamscape—otherworldly horrors spawned by the very stuff of which dreams themselves are made. They haunt nightmares across multiple worlds, often appearing first in the dreams of the mad but slowly finding their way through the dreamscape to other, more lucid dreamers. And just as physical beings can use plane-traveling magic to enter the dreamscape, so too can these creatures sometimes use their own magic to manifest in the material world.

Several D&D monsters could serve admirably as dream-spawned creatures. The most obvious are the quori, from the Eberron campaign setting. Horrors born in the realm of Eberron's dreams, the plane of Dal Quor, they influence the people of Eberron by manifesting in, and possessing, mortal hosts. Phantasmal slayers (see page 152) are fear incarnate and could easily have originated as entities born of nightmare. Nearly any aberration for which a given campaign does not already have a specific origin could have been spawned in the dreamscape. Alien or inhuman creatures, such as aboleths, beholders, and mind flayers, are especially appropriate. The undead of a campaign setting might also have originally come from the nightmare realms: A person dreaming of a lost loved one's return could have inadvertently unleashed the first ghost or vampire upon an unsuspecting world. In a truly unusual cosmology, perhaps the outer planes do not exist, and outsiders come from the world of dreams.

Decide which creatures of your campaign, if any, come from the dreamscape. Mechanically, nightmare creatures do not differ substantially from others. Those DMs who wish to differentiate them, however, should consider the following possibilities.

- Nightmare creatures can only manifest in the waking world so long as they remain near someone who is dreaming, because they use that individual as a doorway to the Material Plane. Should the sleeper be awakened, the creatures are driven back to the dreamscape.
- Nightmare creatures cannot manifest physically in the real world. They appear in their monstrous forms only in the nightmare realms; if they wish to affect the Material Plane, they must possess the bodies of dreaming creatures.
- Nightmare creatures deal real, physical damage to anyone they injure in dreams—even if the dream does not involve true dreamscape travel.
- Nightmare creatures in the physical world deal nonlethal damage, since they attack an individual's essence rather than his physical form. However, anyone who gains sufficient nonlethal damage in this manner to exceed his hit point total becomes mentally enslaved to the creature. This slavery cannot be broken except by spells such as *break enchantment* or *greater restoration*, and even these function only if the caster can succeed on a caster level check against a DC equal to the nightmare creature's HD + 11.

The primary difference between nightmare creatures and standard monsters, however, is one of behavior and motivation. Because they were spawned from the stuff of dreams, nightmare creatures are completely alien in thought and desire. Even most aberrations have some needs in common with humanoids: sustenance, comfort, and the like. Nightmare beasts might not. Their goals can be unfathomable to the human mind. In other cases, they want nothing more than to cause pain, suffering, and fear—precisely what one might expect from creatures that are literally bad dreams made manifest. Some see the waking world as a threat, something to be destroyed so that its inhabitants will cease to encroach mentally on the dreamlands. Others see the waking world as new territory to enslave and conquer, a world peopled with feeble entities that are easily manipulated or slain.

The advantages to using nightmare creatures are twofold. First, you can employ creatures that are alien to the campaign setting both physically and mentally. Interesting and terrifying creatures can appear, move the story along, then disappear without effecting serious changes in the environment or continuity of the setting. These creatures can exhibit abilities previously unknown in the campaign, such as psionics, which can make for an unsettling interlude. Second, the introduction of nightmare creatures can help generate an atmosphere of fear. Few things are as creepy as the growing presence of an alien creature in a PC's dreams—a creature capable of affecting the character's physical well-being and influencing his actions.

Illus. by D. Hanley

Running a successful Dungeons & Dragons game in the horror genre is primarily about tone and feel, about the way you design and run the adventure or the campaign. That said, a creative approach to the standard rules of D&D can help to reinforce the atmosphere of dread in your game. When you tell a player that dread seizes his character like a cold undead hand clenching his heart, that can be effective. When you back that up by telling him that the character is staggered for a round because of that sense of dread, the player starts to become as scared as the character.

The rules in this chapter are designed so that you can integrate them into a campaign as you see fit, with no heavy-handed impositions of fear penalties and the like. You don't want your players to cry out, "Hey, I've fought vampires before and never been scared just by seeing one!" because you've just started using a new rule designed to encourage a sense of horror in your game. In a case like that, there needs to be some understanding between the players and the Dungeon Master, so the players have an accurate expectation of how the rules of the game are going to work for them and their characters.

On the other hand, you can easily incorporate taint mechanics into an ongoing campaign, with a reasonable explanation of why the PCs have never encountered it before. It might have arisen from an extraplanar invasion or a planar conjunction, materialized as the result of a horrific magical experiment gone terribly awry, or appeared as the manifestation of divine judgment on evildoers. Or the PCs might simply never have encountered it before. So too with the other new mechanics in this chapter.

DREAD

At the heart of a successful horror adventure or campaign is a sense of dread. Dread is a complex emotion that includes fear of what is being faced as well as fear of what might lurk around the next corner, horror in response to appalling scenes or monsters, and a building sense of dismay at the increasing disintegration of all that one holds dear.

The key aspect of dread is that, in a well-designed adventure (or movie, novel, or ongoing campaign), it increases gradually over time. What might begin as a bit of anxiety upon approaching an ancient crypt grows over time to full-fledged panic in the face of the ancient lich-lord who dwells within. A mild frustration at a small wound becomes dismay when even clerical magic fails to heal it and increases to horror as the wound spreads, the limb withers, and eventually the body part transforms into a sentient undead thing—all while still affixed in its customary place.

The variety of conditions, with their rules effects (detailed in the glossary to the *Player's Handbook* and in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, pages 300–301), can

reinforce this sense of accumulating dread. One example of a condition that can model an increasing degree of dread is character fear in its various states—shaken, frightened, and panicked, along with the related cowering. However, once a character progresses beyond being shaken, he is effectively out of play, running from the source of his fear. So in addition to the well-defined fear conditions, the DM can use other conditions to model other incapacitating states of dread (see below) with the potential to increase as the ongoing revelations of the adventure take their toll on the PCs' mental and physical fortitude.

Setting Saving Throw DCs: When determining the saving throw DC for a dread effect, consider the following factors: the level of the PCs, the severity of the situation, and the danger the PCs face. High-level PCs have better saving throws, so a good rule of thumb is to set the baseline DC at 10 + the average party level. Very horrific situations involving other PCs or NPCs the characters know well should increase the DC by +2 to +4. If the situation involves clear, imminent danger to the characters, increase the DC by another +2 to +4.

SHOCK

Characters who suddenly face scenes or creatures of utter horror might become dazed, stunned, or even paralyzed, usually just for a single round. Some situations might force characters to make a Will save, with a successful save indicating the character is only dazed, while a failed save indicates that the character is stunned. You can treat dazed, stunned, and paralyzed as a spectrum from least to most severe.

Examples: When Nebin is 12th level, his mentor reveals that he is secretly a lich and explains that he has been grooming Nebin to undergo the transformation to undeath himself. This is a significantly horrific situation, but the mentor remains friendly—at least until Nebin rejects him. If he fails a DC 24 Will save, he is dazed for 1 round.

Eberk (a 9th-level cleric) enters a back room in a temple of Moradin expecting to find a friendly cleric and stumbles into a circle of half-fiends engaged in sacrificing a dwarf on Moradin's altar. This is a dramatically horrific situation, and Eberk is in grave danger. If he makes a successful DC 25 Will save, he is only dazed for 1 round; if he fails, he is stunned for 1 round.

You could replace the effects of a devil's fear aura with the following rule: A creature in the area must succeed on a Will save (DC as stated in the *Monster Manual*) or become stunned. A stunned creature can repeat the saving throw each round on its turn to attempt to shake off the effects. This is a full-round action.

WEARINESS

While shock describes the short-term effects of sudden exposure to horrific things, weariness results from prolonged exposure to horror. Characters might become fatigued after a particularly horrible encounter, and exhausted after a series of them. Characters can typically avoid weariness with successful Fortitude saves, although in some situations a Will save might be more appropriate. You can treat fatigued, exhausted, and staggered as a spectrum from least to most severe.

Examples: Vadania and Alhandra have been carefully making their way through extensive catacombs filled with animated skeletons. They enter a room where a charnel pit full of bones—an enormous undead mass grave—animates to attack them as a single creature. Coming at the end of a series of mildly horrific encounters, this encounter threatens their stability. Each of the 7th-level characters must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save or become fatigued.

After Lidda's death and Jozan's appearance at the head of a vampire legion, things keep getting worse for Tordek and Mialee. They find Regdar broken on a rack, the skin flayed from his body. They discover that Soveliss has been possessed and is slowly transforming into a half-fiend. And then Jozan casts *dominate person* on Tordek and turns him against Nebin. Though he subdues him, the cumulative experience is mentally and emotionally draining. Nebin (who is 9th level) must make a DC 27 Will save. If he succeeds he is only fatigued, but if he fails he becomes exhausted.

ILLNESS AND DESPAIR

The presence of overwhelming evil, scenes of gore, or creatures of true vileness can make characters physically ill. Creatures such as ghasts and troglodytes have special attacks that can sicken characters, while the mingled stench and aura of evil surrounding a hezrou can nauseate characters. These situations typically allow a Fortitude save. You can treat sickened, nauseated, and disabled as a spectrum from least to most severe. Characters disabled from illness who take damage from performing standard actions don't necessarily become dying as a result.

The *crushing despair* spell creates a condition identical to being sickened, so you can also use these conditions for characters who become overwhelmed with despair. In this case, the subject can attempt a Will save to avoid the effects.

Examples: Walking through a dark forest, Regdar feels something dripping from an overhanging branch onto his neck. He touches it, brings his fingers close to his face, and inhales the bitter tang of blood. Looking up into the tree, he sees dozens of corpses in various states of decay hanging among the branches. Right above him is a fresh corpse, still raining blood from where the sharp branches impaled it. Regdar is 13th level, and while this situation is grisly, the danger is not immediately apparent and no one close to him is involved. If he fails a DC 24 Fortitude save, he is sickened for 1d8 rounds.

After becoming separated from his partner in a tomb complex, Hennet (at 10th level) finally finds Tordek leaning against a wall. The dwarf doesn't respond to Hennet's voice, though, and finally Hennet grabs his shoulder and shakes him. Tordek's armor collapses to the ground while a wave of foul-smelling slime splashes around it. Hennet must succeed on a DC 27 Fortitude save or become nauseated. Even if he succeeds, he is sickened for 1d6 rounds.

You could replace the effects of a mummy's despair ability with the following rule: At the first sight of a mummy, the viewer must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or be overcome with despair for the duration of the encounter. The character is treated as sickened while this effect lasts.

OBSESSION

Scenes of horror can transfix characters, commanding their complete attention and shutting out any other sensory information. Such situations are similar to those that cause shock, but

affected characters might become fascinated or even confused. Characters can usually avoid these conditions with a successful Will save. Sometimes, a successful Will save means a character is only fascinated, while a failed save indicates that a character becomes confused.

Example: Making his way through an apparently abandoned mansion, Tordek cautiously cracks opens a door leading to the attic. The soft sound of tinkling music reaches his ears, and he throws the door open. Dozens of music boxes are playing. They rest on shelves, tables, nightstands—every available horizontal surface in the room. On top of each music box is a small glass dome containing a tiny humanoid figure dancing wildly—townspeople who have gone missing. Tordek is 6th level, and the situation is more bizarre than truly horrific. If he fails a DC 16 Will save, he becomes fascinated for 1d6 rounds, simply staring in near-catatonic wonder at the tiny dancing figures.

FEAR

To some degree, fear is part of every D&D game. The rules describe several character conditions related to fear—shaken, panicked, frightened, and cowering—and a number of spells, monsters, and items that can bestow these conditions on characters. The DM in a horror game should make use of these conditions, but sparingly.

Why sparingly? Because handing out a condition like frightened is not very effective at scaring a player. It's actually more frustrating than it is frightening, because the character is effectively taken out of the action until the fear condition is removed. It can be amusing, it can certainly be deadly, but it is rarely horrific.

Instead of imposing fear-related character conditions, the DM in a horror game can use various techniques to encourage the players to roleplay the fear their characters are experiencing. Some particularly effective techniques are discussed in the first chapters of this book. One such technique is very basic: present the characters with an encounter that is clearly too difficult for them to overcome. In such a situation, the players will simply fear for their characters' lives and roleplay the characters' retreat with all possible haste from the encounter.

Using this technique requires care. Many D&D players are conditioned to expect that their characters will be able to handle anything they encounter. Despite the advice in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* suggesting that some 5% of all the encounters in an adventure should be overpowering (EL 5 or more above the PCs' average level), many D&D groups are unaccustomed to such encounters and expect that they will be able to overcome every encounter and never need to run away. If you plan to use overpoweringly difficult encounters, it's a good idea to remind the players ahead of time that they might occasionally (or frequently!) encounter things too strong for them to defeat, and that there is no dishonor in running from a deadly encounter.

ALTERNATIVE DEGREES OF FEAR

Whether they are shaken, frightened, or panicked, characters affected by most fear conditions take the same penalties: –2 on attack rolls (if they can attack at all), saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. Once a character becomes frightened, however, his usefulness in an encounter is extraordinarily limited. In a campaign where fear becomes common, a variant frightened condition can be more appropriate.

A number of monster special abilities cause their targets to become paralyzed with fear, such as a mummy's despair ability and a vargouille's shriek. The DM can use existing character conditions to represent an extreme degree of fear.

Frightened

With this optional rule for the frightened condition, a character who is frightened is not forced to flee from the source of his fear. Instead, this condition imposes a –4 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. A frightened creature subjected to another similar effect (but not the same spell or effect) becomes panicked instead. This optional rule allows fear to escalate more slowly and allows for more differentiation between the panicked and frightened conditions.

ESCALATING FEAR

Fear breeds fear. A character who is shaken becomes more susceptible to fear effects: If another effect would make him shaken again, he becomes frightened instead. If an effect would make him frightened, he instead becomes panicked. Similarly, an already frightened character who is subjected to another fear effect becomes panicked.

As a general rule, multiple exposures to the same spell or effect do not trigger this escalation of fear. Thus, casting *doom* on a target twice does not make it frightened. However, casting *doom* and then *cause fear* will create a heightened state of fear: The target is panicked if it fails its save against *cause fear,* or frightened if it succeeds (assuming it already failed its save against the *doom*, of course). Similarly, a character fighting two dragons does not become frightened if the frightful presence of both dragons would make him shaken—the two dragons' frightful presence abilities are considered the same effect.

The durations of the different fear effects are not relevant. If a creature subject to *doom* becomes panicked as a result of a *cause fear* spell, it is panicked for the full duration of *cause fear,* even if the *doom* spell's duration expires before the *cause fear* spell's duration does.

PHOBIAS

One effective way of using the fear-related character conditions in a horror game is through phobias.

Phobias occur in three degrees of severity: mild, moderate, and severe. Characters can be given mild phobias by the DM either as part of that character's background or due to some strange event that character experiences. Any level of phobia might occur as a result of depravity (see The Taint of Evil, beginning on page 62). When a character with a mild phobia encounters the object of his phobia, he must make a successful Will save or become shaken. The DC of the save equals 12 + the CR of the challenge that is the object of the phobia. (Treat CRs of less than 1 as 0.)

A moderate phobia requires the character to succeed on a Will save (DC 14 + the CR of the challenge) or become frightened.

A severe phobia requires the character to succeed on a Will save (DC 16 + the CR of the challenge) or become panicked.

The normal rules for stacking fear effects apply to phobias as well. If a character becomes shaken from exposure to an object of his phobia, a second exposure to a different object while he is still shaken makes him frightened. An encounter with a group of creatures of the same kind counts as a single exposure, even if more creatures of the same kind appear in the middle of the encounter. However, if a character with a phobia about vermin is fighting a group of monstrous centipedes when a monstrous spider suddenly appears, this different type of vermin counts as a second exposure to a different object.

A player (or the DM in some cases) can choose any of the following creature types as the object of a character's phobia: aberrations, animals, constructs, dragons, elementals and fey, giants and monstrous humanoids, magical beasts, oozes and vermin, outsiders, plants, or undead.

In addition, characters can have phobias regarding the following situations:

Cramped Quarters: This phobia can by activated by any situation that calls for an Escape Artist check, including grappling. It also applies whenever the character is paralyzed. The effective CR equals the CR of the creature grapplling the character, or 1 for every 5 points by which the DC of the Escape Artist check exceeds 10, or the saving throw DC of the paralysis effect –10. A character with this phobia can never initiate a grapple.

Darkness: This phobia applies whenever the character is in shadowy illumination or complete darkness. Darkvision does not negate this phobia, but low-light vision might make a character's space brightly illuminated instead of shadowy. This phobia also applies when the character is blinded. The effective CR equals one-half the character's level for shadowy illumination, or the character's level for complete darkness or being blinded.

Fire: This phobia applies when the character is within the effect or area of a spell with the fire descriptor, when the character is targeted by such a spell, when the character encounters a creature with the fire subtype, and in any other situation when the character is at real risk from taking fire damage (such as being near lava, being targeted by alchemist's fire, or fighting near a raging bonfire). The effective CR equals the actual CR of a fire subtype creature, or double the fire spell's level, or 1 per 2d6 points of damage that could be dealt by contact with a nearby fire.

Heights: This phobia applies when the character is moving vertically (climbing, flying, falling, and so on), or near a sudden drop (clifftops, bridges, stairs, pit traps, and the like), or in any other situation where falling damage is possible. The effective CR equals 1 per 20 feet of height. The DM can apply modifiers to the Will save DC, particularly if the character is in a situation that applies modifiers to Climb or Balance check DCs. For example, if the character is crossing a chasm on a slippery ice bridge (+5 to Balance check DCs) or climbing a crumbling, moss-covered cliff (+5 to Climb check DCs), the Will save DC might also increase by 5.

Magic: This phobia applies whenever the character is targeted by a hostile spell or is within the area of a hostile spell. The effective CR equals double the spell's level. All spells cast by the same creature during a single encounter count as a single exposure to the object of the character's phobia.

Water: This phobia applies when the character is standing or swimming in water, on a boat, or facing a creature with the water subtype. The effective CR equals the actual CR of a water subtype creature, one-half the character's level for still water, or the character's level for fast-moving water.

Removing Phobias

A phobia can be removed from a character through the application of a *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell directed specifically at that phobia. If the phobia is only a mild phobia, a character can also overcome his fear by facing it directly. In order to do so, the character must succeed on his Will save against 10 consecutive exposures to the source of his fear.

THE TAINT OF EVIL

One of the features that distinguishes a fantasy horror game from a more typical fantasy campaign is the idea, prominent in the horror genre, that evil is a corrupting force. Though a paladin might remain entirely virtuous in his actions and even his thoughts, long years of struggle against the forces of evil can erode his body and soul. True heroes refuse to allow the taint of evil to spread, warding it off through magic or penance. Sometimes, however, even well-intentioned characters end up embracing the taint within them, using it to increase their physical or mental power.

Characters can acquire taint by entering a place suffused with evil, by coming into contact with a horribly evil object, through the attacks of certain monsters, and by performing evil acts. This taint can manifest physically, in which case it is called corruption, or mentally, in which case it is called depravity. Both corruption and depravity are measured in points. Typically, characters acquire 1 to 3 points of corruption or depravity from exposure to evil. Prolonged exposure generally has the potential to bestow an additional 1 point of corruption or depravity for every 24 hours of exposure. The specific amounts of taint acquired from different circumstances are detailed elsewhere in this book—see Horror Environments later in this chapter, Dread Magic in Chapter 5, and specific monster descriptions in Chapter 6.

In most cases, a character can attempt a saving throw to resist the effects of taint. Corruption allows a Fortitude save, while depravity allows a Will save.

Any time a character acquires more points of corruption at one time than his current Constitution modifier, he must attempt another Fortitude save (DC 15 + points of corruption acquired). If this save is successful, he is sickened for 1d4 rounds; if he fails, he is nauseated for 1d4 rounds.

Similarly, any time a character acquires more points of depravity at one time than his current Wisdom modifier, he must attempt another Will save (DC 15 + points of depravity acquired). If this save is successful, he is dazed for 1d4 rounds; if he fails, he is stunned for 1d4 rounds.

Creatures with the Evil subtype and undead creatures are immune to any negative effects from taint. They automatically have effective corruption and depravity scores equal to one-half their Charisma score, +1 for undead or +2 for outsiders. They take no penalties due to these taint scores, but they can use them to qualify for feats or prestige classes (see Chapter 5).

EFFECTS OF TAINT

Both corruption and depravity manifest in mild, moderate, and severe symptoms. The relationship between a character's taint scores and his Constitution and Wisdom scores determines the severity of the physical and mental manifestations of his taint. A character with a high Constitution can acquire more corruption before displaying physical symptoms, while a character with a low Wisdom quickly manifests mental symptoms of his depravity.

To determine the severity of a character's taint symptoms, first find his Constitution score in the leftmost column of Table 4–1: Taint Thresholds, and read across until you find the column to the right that includes his current physical corruption score. The top of that column indicates the severity of his physical taint symptoms. Then repeat the process with his Wisdom score and his depravity score to determine the severity of his mental taint symptoms.

Table 4–1: Taint Thresholds

Con or Wis Score	No Taint	Mild Taint	Moderate Taint	Severe Taint	Dead/ Insane
1–4	0	1	2–5	6–13	14+
5–8	0	1–3	4–11	12–27	28+
9–12	0	1–5	6–17	18–41	42+
13–16	0	1–7	8–23	24–55	56+
17–20	0	1–9	10–29	30–69	70+
21–24	0	1–11	12–35	36–83	84+
25–28	0	1–13	14–41	42–97	98+
29–32	0	1–15	16–47	48–111	112+
33–36	0	1–17	18–53	54–125	126+

No Taint: A character with no taint manifests no symptoms.

Mild Taint: A character who gains his first point of taint crosses the threshold into mild taint and must receive a *restoration*, *heal*, or *greater restoration* spell and have his taint reduced to 0 within 24 hours or be permanently afflicted with mild taint. If a character retains mild taint after 24 hours, he manifests one minor physical or mental symptom from the descriptions below. A character with mild depravity and mild corruption manifests one physical symptom and one mental symptom. Once a character manifests a minor symptom, only a *miracle* or *wish* spell can remove the symptom and return the character's taint to 0.

Moderate Taint: A character who gains enough taint to cross the threshold into moderate taint must receive a *heal* or *greater restoration* spell and have his taint reduced to mild taint level within 24 hours or be permanently afflicted with moderate taint. If a character retains moderate taint after 24 hours, he manifests one moderate physical or mental symptom from the descriptions below. A character with moderate depravity and moderate corruption manifests one physical symptom and one mental symptom. Once a character manifests a moderate symptom, only a *miracle* or *wish* spell can remove the symptom and return the character's taint to mild. A character with moderate taint keeps the symptoms he gained from mild taint in addition to the new ones gained from moderate taint.

Severe Taint: A character who gains enough taint to cross the threshold into severe taint must receive a *greater restoration* spell and have his taint reduced to moderate taint level within 24 hours or be permanently afflicted with severe taint. If a character retains severe taint after 24 hours, he manifests one severe physical or mental symptom from the descriptions below. A character with severe depravity and severe corruption manifests one physical symptom and one mental symptom. Once a character manifests a severe symptom, only a *miracle* or *wish* spell can remove the symptom and return the character's taint to moderate.

For example, Regdar has a Constitution of 14 and a Wisdom of 8. If he acquires 4 points of corruption and 4 points of depravity, he displays only mild physical symptoms (one mild physical symptom), but moderate mental symptoms (one mild mental symptom and one moderate mental symptom). When his corruption and depravity scores each reach 12, he has moderate corruption (and manifests a moderate physical symptom) and severe depravity (and manifests a severe mental symptom).

If a character's corruption score ever exceeds the severe taint threshold, he dies, and 1d6 hours later he rises as a tainted minion—a hideous, evil creature under the control of the DM. The tainted minion template is described in Chapter 6.

If a character's depravity score ever exceeds the severe taint threshold, he goes irretrievably mad. He gains the tainted raver template described in Chapter 6, and (if a player character) falls under the control of the DM.

To determine the exact nature of a character's physical or mental taint symptoms, roll 1d10 and look up the result on Table 4–2: Corruption Effects or Table 4–3: Depravity Effects. If the character later gains more taint and crosses the threshold into a higher level (mild to moderate or moderate to severe), he gains the next symptom to the right on the table. For example, if Regdar's mild level of corruption is expressed as the mild physical symptom "feet curl," then if his corruption score rises to moderate, he will in addition manifest the symptom "joint pain."

Table 4–2: Corruption Effects

d10	Mild	Moderate	Severe
1	Dead eye	Lips shrink	Lich eyes
2	Ear scabs	Fingers and toes fuse	Shiveled flesh
3	Gums swell	Bones thicken	Great swollen growths
4	Feet curl	Joint pain	Spine twists
5	Lumps	Eruption of sores	Wrigglers
6	Odor of decay	Paralyzed face	Nose rots
7	Palsy	Uncontrollable seizures	Skull deformed
8	Skin seeps	Blood eruption	Internal corruption
9	Skin sloughs	Skin thickens	Skin lichen
10	Winded	Chronic illness	Lungs eaten away

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Corruption manifests as physical symptoms: muscular degeneration, illness, frailty, and the like.

Mild Corruption Effects

Dead Eye: Your eyes begin to cloud over, obscuring your vision. In combat, every time you attack an opponent that has concealment, roll your miss chance twice. If either or both results indicate that you miss, your attack fails.

Ear Scabs: Your ears fill up with a crusty, scabrous substance. You take a –2 penalty on Listen checks.

Feet Curl: Your feet warp and curl inward. Your speed is reduced by 10 feet.

Gums Swell: Your gums swell, bleed, and rot. You have difficulty pronouncing words clearly. Whenever you cast

Illus. by W. Reynolds

"The years have not been good to you, I'm afraid"

a spell with a verbal component, you must succeed on a DC 20 caster level check or the spell fails to activate.

Lumps: Burning hot lumps rise up all over your body. You have a constant fever. Every time you try to run or charge you must make a DC 20 Fortitude Save or become fatigued.

Odor of Decay: You give off an unhealthy odor of decay. Animals find your smell repellent. You take a –2 penalty on Handle Animal, Ride, and wild empathy checks.

Palsy: Your muscles are prone to tics and quivering shakes. You take a –2 penalty on ranged attack rolls.

Skin Seeps: Your skin seeps greasy, yellow ichor. You add a +2 circumstance bonus on Escape Artist checks and on grapple checks made to resist or escape a grapple or to escape a pin. You take –2 on your Climb and Sleight of Hand checks. Opponents add +2 to their attack roll when attempting to disarm you.

Skin Sloughs: The skin on your face peels off in long, papery strips, leaving unsightly red patches. You take a –2 penalty on Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Perform checks.

Winded: You are constantly short of breath and feel like you can't get enough air. You are staggered during the third round and any subsequent rounds of any combat.

Moderate Corruption Effects

Blood Eruption: In moments of intense activity, blood gushes from your nostrils and ears. At the beginning of any combat encounter, you must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be sickened for 4 rounds.

Bones Thicken: Your skeleton warps and thickens. Raise your Strength score by 2, and reduce your Dexterity score by 4.

Chronic Illness: You are plagued with a phlegm-laden, wracking cough. You also suffer occasional bouts of vomiting, often at specific times of day. You take a –3 penalty on Fortitude saves.

Eruption of Sores: Open, painful sores, some leaking blood or pus, erupt on your body. You take a –1 penalty on Strength- and Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

Fingers and Toes Fuse: Your fingers and toes web and fuse. You take a –2 penalty on your attack rolls. Whenever you cast a spell with a somatic component, you must succeed on a DC 20 caster level check or the spell fails to activate.

Joint Pain: Your joints, particularly your knees and elbows, sometimes flare up in sharp pain. You take a –3 penalty on Reflex saves.

Lips Shrink: Your lips pull back into a frozen rictus, exposing your teeth and gums at all times. You take a –2 penalty on Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

Paralyzed Face: Your facial muscles grow so feeble that you can no longer smile, frown, or show any emotion. Food dribbles from the corners of your mouth when you eat. Gain a +1 bonus on Bluff checks and take a –1 penalty on other Charisma-based ability checks or skill checks.

Skin Thickens: Your skin thickens, cracking and turning leathery. You gain +1 natural armor, and take a –2 penalty on Dexterity-based ability checks and skill checks.

Uncontrollable Seizures: You suffer from uncontrollable seizures that wrack your body with spasms. You take a –4 penalty on initiative rolls.

Severe Corruption Effects

Great Swollen Growths: Great swollen growths appear on your body. You take a –2 penalty to your Armor Class.

Internal Corruption: Though your corruption is not visible to others, the inside of your body is a festering cesspool of corruption. Bloody pus pools in your body cavities, strange

growths develop on your organs, or tiny limbs or heads bud beneath your skin. Reduce your Constitution score by 2.

Some prestige classes allow a character to take this symptom in place of any other one. This symptom allows you to hide your corruption because it is all internal. This symptom can even be taken to replace a mild or moderate symptom if desired. No extra bonus feat is granted if this symptom is taken to replace a mild symptom (see page 67).

Lich Eyes: Your eyes rot away, leaving eerie green flames in their empty sockets. You gain darkvision out to 60 feet, or add 30 feet to the range of your existing darkvision. You also gain light blindness: Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds you for 1 round. On subsequent rounds, you are dazzled as long as you remain in the affected area.

Lungs Eaten Away: Your lungs are eaten away from the inside, resulting in wet, labored, painful breathing. Your physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution) are each reduced by 1.

Nose Rots: The flesh of your nose rots away, leaving skull-like openings. Reduce your Charisma score by 2.

Shriveled Flesh: Your flesh shrivels and clings to your bones, making you unnaturally gaunt. When you manifest this symptom, subtract your Hit Dice from your hit point total. Thereafter, subtract 1 from the number of hit points you gain at each level. This effect can reduce the number of hit points you gain to 0 (but not below).

Skin Lichen: A black, lichenous growth spreads across your skin, causing a constant itching that interferes with any physical activity. You take a –2 penalty on Strength-, Dexterity-, and Constitution-based ability checks and skill checks.

Skull Deformed: Your skull becomes enlarged, distorted, and deformed. Reduce both your Intelligence and Wisdom scores by 2. You also take a –3 penalty on Will saves.

Spine Twists: Your spine twists and your back hunches. Reduce your Dexterity score by 2.

Wrigglers: Parasitic worms protrude from your sores, sapping your strength. Reduce your Strength score by 2. You gain a +2 bonus to Intimidate checks and take a –4 penalty on other Charisma-based checks.

Table 4–3: Depravity Effects

d10	Mild	Moderate	Severe
1	Aggressive	Treacherous	Murderous
2	Bestial	Deranged	Unbalanced
3	Compulsive	Hysterical	Unresponsive
4	Crazed	Jittery	Craven
5	Disoriented	Hallucinating	Paranoid
6	Mildly phobic	Moderately phobic	Severely phobic
7	Neglectful	Distracted	Enthralled
8	Opinionated	Solipsistic	Hubristic
9	Prophetic	Delusional	Apathetic
10	Sycophantic	Weak-Willed	Fatalistic

MENTAL SYMPTOMS

Depravity manifests as mental symptoms: growing paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and other problems that could be described as madness. It is important to note that madness in fantastic horror is not an illness that afflicts good and evil alike: It is an expression or a result of evil gnawing away at the mind and soul.

Mild Depravity Effects

Aggressive: You are easily angered and cannot hide your feelings. In combat, you try so hard to hurt your enemies that you neglect your own defense, and you take a –1 penalty to Armor Class.

Bestial: You take on a ferocious, wild demeanor. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Handle Animal, Ride, and wild empathy checks. You take a –1 penalty on other Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

Compulsive: Pick a compulsive ritual to adopt. For example, you and your equipment are never clean enough. You can only break out of the compulsive pattern by eating bugs, which sometimes disagree with you. Once each day, make a DC 10 Fortitude save; if you fail, take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage.

Crazed: You can no longer easily cope with sudden changes in circumstance. If you are surprised at the outset of an encounter, for your first action you have an equal chance of charging the foe or running away.

Disoriented: You lose track of events. If you are surprised at the outset of an encounter, you are dazed for 1 round.

Mildly Phobic: You gain a mild phobia, which requires you to succeed on a Will save or become shaken whenever you encounter the object of your phobia. The DC of the save equals 12 + the CR of the challenge that is the object of the phobia. (Treat CRs of less than 1 as 0.) See page 61 for more about phobias.

Neglectful: You disregard hygiene and cultural mores. You take a –2 penalty on Charisma-based ability checks and skill checks.

Opinionated: You are so wrapped up in commenting on everything you hear that you are often caught off-guard. You are always flat-footed in the first round of combat.

Prophetic: Your dark dreams torment you with strange visions of things that might occur in the future. You zealously proclaim a different prophecy each week, making sure everyone you meet knows what is about to transpire. Your DM determines what prophetic insight you envision each week (10% are actually accurate!). In addition, you take all the usual ill effects of continual nightmares (see Dreams and Nightmares, page 52).

Sycophantic: You fill the air with a torrent of unctuous flattery of your companions, opponents, or imaginary friends. You take a –2 penalty on Listen checks and Spot checks. Enemies gain a +2 bonus on Listen checks to hear you.

Moderate Depravity Effects

Delusional: You're convinced that the world is an illusion and that you and your companions are being controlled by inhabitants of a distant, alien realm. You take a –2 penalty on Wisdom-based ability checks and skill checks.

Deranged: Your grasp upon reality becomes tenuous. You take a –2 penalty on Intelligence-based ability checks and skill checks.

Distracted: You pay more attention to the whispers in your mind than to your surroundings. You take a –2 penalty on skill checks.

Hallucinating: You see things that aren't there, and often have trouble sorting reality from your imagination. You take a –6 penalty on initiative checks.

Hysterical: Everything you meet is hilarious. It takes a short time to perceive the humor; then a laughing jag

overwhelms you. During the second round of a combat encounter, you can take only a single move action or standard action.

Jittery: You are easily startled and spooked. If you are hit while flat-footed, you become panicked.

Moderately Phobic: You gain a moderate phobia, which requires you to succeed on a Will save (DC 14 + the CR of the challenge) or become frightened whenever you encounter the object of your phobia. This symptom replaces your previous symptom of mild phobia. See page 61 for more about phobias.

Solipsistic: You believe that you are the only thing that matters in the universe. As a result, whenever you are struck in combat, you have to make a DC 20 Will save. If you fail the save, you take an additional 1 point of damage per die of damage received.

Treacherous: Any time the chance to make an attack of opportunity presents itself, whether against an opponent or an ally, make a DC 20 Will save. If you fail the save, you must make the attack of opportunity, even if the target is your closest ally. If presented with multiple targets, determine randomly which you attack.

Weak-Willed: The constant presence of demonic voices whispering in your ears has sapped your will. You take a –3 penalty on Will saves.

Severe Depravity Effects

Apathetic: You withdraw into yourself, losing contact with the world. Reduce both your Charisma and Wisdom scores by 2.

Craven: You become a lily-livered coward. When casting, you must always cast defensively. When attacking, you must always fight defensively.

Enthralled: You are drawn to and fascinated by evil. You no longer have the will to strike it down. Whenever you fight an evil opponent, you always attack at –4 and any damage you do counts only as nonlethal damage.

Fatalistic: You become oppressed by negative, defeatist thinking and are convinced there's little you can do to save yourself from a horrible fate. Take a –3 penalty on your saving throws.

Hubristic: You regard yourself as superior to all things, even the gods. Divine healing has no effect on you.

Murderous: You experience irresistible murderous urges. If an opportunity to deliver a coup de grace is available, you must take this action. You cannot distinguish between an ally and an opponent—if anyone is helpless, you must deliver the coup de grace.

Paranoid: You grow overly suspicious, even of your closest companions. In combat, you cannot avoid watching for signs of treachery. Whenever one of your allies engaged in combat makes an attack and fails to hit, you become suspicious that the ally is secretly a traitor to your party. You take a –1 penalty to any rolls you make during that turn, since some of your attention is focused on monitoring the suspected traitor's activities. If more than one ally fails to hit, the penalty is cumulative.

Severely Phobic: You gain a severe phobia, which requires you to succeed on a Will save (DC 16 + the CR of the challenge) or become panicked whenever you encounter the object of your phobia. This symptom replaces your previous symptom of moderate phobia. See page 61 for more about phobias.

Unbalanced: Your unstable mind makes you unpredictable, particularly in combat. You are automatically *confused* on your first turn in any combat and every other turn thereafter.

Unresponsive: Your senses are dulled and you lose the ability to discern the truth of the world around you. Reduce your Wisdom score by 2.

TAINT AND ORIENTAL ADVENTURES

The taint system presented in this book is derived from a similar system that originally appeared in *Oriental Adventures*, with some modifications introduced in *Unearthed Arcana*. The rules in this book are an update and revision to the earlier rules, and replace the earlier system. If you wish, you can easily use monsters, *maho* ("blood magic") spells, and other rules from *Oriental Adventures* with this taint system.

The Shadowlands: Spending time in the Shadowlands increases a character's corruption score, which can be resisted with successful Fortitude saving throws, as described in *Oriental Adventures*.

Magic Items: Oni armor and tainted weapons both increase the target's corruption score.

Monsters: Creatures with the Shadowlands subtype are considered to have corruption and depravity scores equal to half their Charisma score. Undead creatures add +1 to this number, while outsiders add +2. Creatures that have taint scores specified have corruption and depravity scores equal to the specified taint score.

The attacks of a mamono increase the target's corruption score.

The akutsukai's *command the taint* ability functions on characters with corruption or depravity scores. If neither the target's corruption nor his depravity is severe, he gains a +2 bonus to resist being rebuked or commanded. If both his corruption and his depravity are no greater than mild, he gains a +4 bonus to resist being rebuked or commanded.

The akutenshi's *breath of taint* ability increases the subjects' depravity scores.

Maho and the Taint: Each time a character casts a maho spell, he must make a Will save (DC 10 + spell level) or increase his depravity score by 1. (This is identical to the "evil spells and taint" variant rule presented on page 125.)

The *cloud of taint* and *tainted aura* spells increase their targets' corruption scores.

Taint Suppression: Characters with the maho-bujin and maho-tsukai prestige classes no longer manifest physical symptoms of their corruption. Their depravity manifests in the normal range of mental symptoms, but they can replace any physical symptom of corruption with the internal corruption symptom. If such a character enters a tainted area, his corruption immediately manifests externally again, and he regains the physical symptoms he exchanged for internal corruption, if any. These physical symptoms disappear again 1d4 days after he leaves a tainted area. Otherwise, it is impossible to tell from external appearance that the maho-bujin or maho-tsukai carries corruption.

Taint and Bonus Feats

When a character reaches moderate taint, and again when he reaches severe taint, he gains a bonus feat. This can be any feat for which the character has the prerequisites.

Since taint is cumulative, a character with a feat whose prerequisite is a specific level of taint retains access to that feat even after he acquires enough taint to rise to the next taint level. For example, a sorcerer with the Corrupt Arcana feat (see page 120), which has mild depravity as a prerequisite, still benefits from that feat if his depravity rises to moderate or even severe.

By contrast, falling below the specified taint level for a feat renders that feat inoperative. For example, a character with the Tainted Fury feat (see page 124), which has moderate corruption as a prerequisite, cannot benefit from that feat if his taint falls to mild but regains access to the feat if his corruption later rises to moderate again.

Resisting Taint

There are natural substances that absorb taint and thus protect those who carry them. Some examples include a pure jade rod the size of a human finger, a sheet of vellum prepared from the skin of a month-old lamb, an intricately carved piece of lightning-struck oak, or a silk sash. The DM can create other examples appropriate to his campaign. Regardless of the shape or substance of the item, taint-absorbing items cost 100 gp each.

As the item absorbs taint, it darkens, softens, and gradually rots. During this time, it absorbs all taint to which the carrier is exposed, to a maximum of 7 points (enough to protect the carrier for a week of travel in a tainted area). Multiple items protect a character from more taint, but only to a point, as described in Table 4–4: Resisting Taint. If a character carries multiple taint-absorbing items, they all decompose gradually at the same time, distributing the absorbed taint among every item carried. The presence of multiple items seems to amplify the taint even as the items absorb it, causing them to decompose more rapidly.

Table 4–4: Resisting Taint

Number of Items	Points Absorbed
1	7
2	12
3	15
4	16
5	15
6	12
7	1

Taint and Alignment

A character's alignment can be affected by acquired taint. As a character acquires more corruption, and particularly as he acquires more and more depravity, he is increasingly inclined toward evil acts. The stench of evil clings to a character with at least moderate taint, causing him to register as evil to a *detect evil* spell. Any actual alignment change is up to the DM's discretion, but as a rule of thumb characters with moderate taint are neutral at best, while characters with severe taint are usually evil.

Deities and Codes of Conduct

Clerics of good deities risk divine displeasure if they acquire too much taint. Divine warnings might begin when a cleric acquires moderate levels of corruption or depravity, or perhaps even sooner. If a cleric of a good deity acquires severe levels of taint, he is considered to have grossly violated the deity's code of conduct and loses all spells and class features until he atones and reduces his taint to at most moderate levels. (This restriction does not apply to clerics in Eberron, where the deities do not enforce alignment restrictions on their clerics.)

A paladin who acquires moderate levels of taint loses all paladin spells and abilities and cannot advance further as a paladin until he atones and reduces his taint to at most mild levels.

Cleansing Taint

It is possible to remove taint from characters in several ways, including through the use of spells, the performance of good deeds, and cleansing in a sacred spring. Taint cannot be removed unless the tainted character wants to be cleansed. If an increase in taint causes a character's corruption or depravity score to cross over into a higher taint level (for example, shifting from mild to moderate), neither taint score can be reduced to a lower taint level unless quickly treated (within 24 hours) or through use of an *atonement*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell (see below).

Spells

The following spells can reduce taint scores when cast outside tainted areas. No character can have a taint score reduced by any particular spell more than once per day, although different spells can reduce taint if cast on the same character in the same day.

Atonement: This spell can remove taint, but with limits. First, it always requires a quest. Second, the caster chooses a number up to his caster level when he casts the *atonement*, and the spell reduces the target's corruption and depravity scores by that amount. This use of *atonement*, which costs the caster 500 XP, can reduce taint to a lower taint level.

Heal: This spell reduces a character's corruption and depravity scores by 1 point per three caster levels. If used within 24 hours of the target's acquiring enough taint to qualify as mild or moderate taint, *heal* can reduce taint below that threshold.

Miracle or *Wish:* These spells remove sufficient taint to place the target at the highest threshold of the next lower taint level, regardless of how much time has passed.

Remove Curse: This spell reduces the character's depravity score by 1.

Remove Disease: This spell reduces the character's corruption score by 1.

Restoration: This spell reduces the character's corruption and depravity scores by 1 point per four caster levels. If used within 24 hours of the target's acquiring enough taint to qualify as mild taint, it can reduce taint below that threshold.

Greater Restoration: This spell reduces the character's corruption and depravity scores by a number of points equal to the caster level of the cleric casting *greater restoration*. If

used within 24 hours of a taint threshold being crossed, it can reduce taint to below that threshold.

Good Deeds

Simple good deeds are not enough to remove taint. A character wishing to reduce his depravity score through good deeds must undertake a specific ritual under the guidance of one of his deity's clerics. The ritual prepares the character to undertake the deed.

Each deity's faith has a list of ritual good deeds the faithful can perform to prove their dedication to the deity. For example, the faithful of St. Cuthbert can choose to put on garments sacred to their faith (and which identify their faith to anyone who sees them) and patrol a particular part of their home as part of the militia or city guard. Adventuring is never part of such a good deed, and a character who undertakes an adventure prior to completing his deed must begin again with the ritual (but see the alternate option below).

The good deed must be repeated every day for a week. On completion, the character's depravity score is reduced by 1 point. The character can continue the deed for another week to continue losing depravity or can return to the temple to undertake the ritual again and begin a different deed.

Alternatively, good deeds might be quests undertaken on behalf of the deity. After the quest ends, the character's depravity score is reduced by 1 point per week required to complete the quest.

Sacred Springs

Springs sacred to a particular deity or cause are located in remote regions and can be reached only by long and dangerous travel. For each day a character spends resting and cleansing himself at a sacred spring, his corruption score is reduced by 1 point. A character using this method to reduce his corruption score can undertake no activities other than resting, eating, sleeping, meditation, and normal conversation.

HORROR ENVIRONMENTS

The environment of a horror game is part of the story, not just a backdrop to the tale. Some locations are infused with the taint of evil. Some have other kinds of deleterious effects on any creatures that enter. Some are haunted, and others just evoke images of death and decay—graveyards, mausoleums, and other mortuary terrain. This section describes these environments for use in horror adventures.

TAINTED LOCATIONS

Some locations are so suffused with evil that simply entering them exposes a character to corruption or depravity, and lingering there deals increasing taint. For example, an evil temple that has hosted hundreds of human sacrifices, a portal to an evil plane, the crypt-home of a powerful lich, or the site of a mass murder might all harbor some degree of taint. Entire planes of existence might also be suffused with taint.

Depending on the nature of the site, a tainted location can bestow either corruption or depravity upon characters who enter it. Sites strongly associated with the undead and with death often bestow corruption, while sites linked to evil outsiders and human evil more often bestow depravity. In general, initial exposure to such a tainted place increases a character's taint score (either corruption or depravity) by 1 point. If the evil of the place is very great, it could increase the character's taint score by 1d3 or even 1d4 points. Characters can attempt a saving throw (Fortitude to resist corruption, Will to resist depravity) to avoid this taint or reduce the size of the increase to their taint scores. The DC ranges from 20 for a typical site up to 25 or 30 for extremely malevolent locales.

For every 24 hours spent in a tainted place, a character must make another saving throw to avoid his appropriate taint score increasing by 1. The base DC is 10, +5 for every consecutive 24 hours of exposure.

Tainted locales have additional effects beyond increasing the taint of characters who enter them. Whenever a character casts a spell with the evil descriptor in a tainted area, he gains +1 effective caster level but must make a Will save (DC 15 + spell level) or have his depravity score increase by 1. Whenever a character casts a spell with the good descriptor or a spell from the healing subschool in a tainted area, he takes –1 effective caster level.

Any creature that dies in a tainted area animates in 1d4 hours as an undead creature, usually a zombie of the appropriate size. Burning a corpse protects it from this effect.

Cleansing Tainted Places: The *hallow* spell can remove taint from an area, but it takes time. The spell must remain intact for an entire year to remove the taint. If, during that time, an opposing character casts *unhallow* on some or all of the area, the effort is lost and must be reinstated by another casting of *hallow*. The *hallow* spell only affects a 40-foot-radius area, so large areas could require many clerics working simultaneously to completely cleanse them.

DREAD EFFECTS

The effects described in this section are similar to terrain features. While terrain affects the physical capabilities of creatures within it, dread effects have an impact on abilities and characteristics in a magical or apparently magical way. For example, rather than granting cover or hindering movement, blood rock increases the threat range of attacks made in its area, and abyssal blackgrass restricts healing near it. Each of these effects is intended to encourage a horrific atmosphere by hampering or impeding characters without completely disabling them.

Abyssal Blackgrass

Patches of this thick black weed often spread through planar portals or through tiny seeds inadvertently carried in the clothing or gear of planar travelers. When it takes root on the Material Plane, abyssal blackgrass grows in a small clump about one foot across, although its roots spread in a 50-foot radius just under the surface of the ground.

Natural healing is impossible within 50 feet (in any direction) of a clump of abyssal blackgrass. Even magical healing is impaired, restoring only half the normal number of hit points.

Anyone who casts or is subject to a spell with the evil descriptor while within 50 feet of a clump of abyssal blackgrass must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + spell level) or increase his corruption score by 1.

Pulling up a clump of blackgrass does not kill it or negate its baleful effect, and the grass regrows in 1d4 days. Only digging up the entire root system—or destroying the plant with a *blight* or similar spell—can prevent it from regrowing.

Blood Rock

In certain places, the very essence of war and violence suffuses the earth or stone. Found naturally in ancient battlefields and certain outer planes, blood rock can be extracted from such areas and used to infuse other locations with the same violent essence. Whether occurring naturally or transplanted, blood rock causes weapons to strike harder, claws to tear deeper, and blood to flow more freely.

An area of blood rock increases the lethality of any attack made by a creature standing in that area. Double the threat range of all attacks made within an area affected by blood rock. To gain this benefit, a creature must be touching the ground in the affected area. This increase in threat range does not stack with the increased threat range from the Improved Critical feat, the *keen edge* spell, or the keen weapon property.

Deliberately seeding an area with blood rock requires 5 pounds of blood rock for every 5-foot square to be affected. Simply carrying 5 pounds of blood rock around in your pockets is not enough to gain the benefits of its presence, although it might be enough to cause the character carrying it to gain taint. Blood rock must be placed in an area for a period of at least 48 hours before its presence permeates the area. Blood rock can be gathered and moved, although it then requires another 48 hours to take effect in its new location.

Tainted Blood Rock: Indistinguishable from normal blood rock except that it radiates a moderate aura of evil, tainted blood rock is suffused with hatred and evil as well as violence. A character who scores a critical hit while standing on tainted blood rock must make a successful DC 25 Fortitude save or have his corruption score increase by 1.

Charnel Bog

Often formed at the sites of great battles where water has come in to cover the wasted land, charnel bogs are both horrible and deadly. Pale grasses grow on desolate islands in the midst of these bogs, but no living animals inhabit charnel bogs.

Such an aura of evil pervades a charnel bog that certain magic is impeded within its borders. Characters attempting to cast a spell with the good or healing descriptor must attempt a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level) or lose the spell. Turning checks made to turn undead take a –4 penalty within a charnel bog, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus, as if an *unhallow* spell encompassed the bog.

Characters camping within a charnel bog find their sleep troubled by nightmares. They are unable to rest properly, and morning finds them fatigued and unable to regain arcane or divine spells with the good descriptor for the next 24 hours. They regain no hit points from their night spent in the bog.

Finally, characters whose travels take them on long treks through a charnel bog find it sapping their will and even robbing them of their desire to leave the place. They experience increasing apathy and despair, a dulling of their senses, and a growing feeling of paranoia. At the conclusion of every week spent in a charnel bog, any living creature must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 10 + the number of consecutive weeks spent in the bog). Failure indicates that the character has lost all will to continue on his journey. He cannot leave the bog of his own volition and has no desire to do so. All memories of his previous life slowly fade into nothingness, and a *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell is required to return the character to normal.

Other Hazards: Charnel bogs often manifest signs of a haunting (see below). Disease is also common in charnel bogs, including inhaled diseases such as cackle fever and mindfire. Also, some charnel bogs are suffused with taint, so that a character entering the bog must make a DC 25 Fortitude save. If he fails, his corruption score increases by 1d3. Even on a successful save, his corruption score increases by 1.

Night Stone

This stone is infused with raw negative energy. A living creature within 5 feet of a floor, wall, or statue formed of night stone takes 1d6 points of damage per round. A *death ward* spell protects a character from this damage.

HAUNTING PRESENCES

Sometimes when undead are created they come into being without a physical form and are merely presences of malign evil. Haunting presences usually occur as the result of atrocious crimes. Tied to particular locations or objects, these beings might reveal their unquiet natures only indirectly, at least at first.

As a haunting presence, an undead is impossible to affect or even sense directly. A haunting presence is more fleeting than undead who appear as incorporeal ghosts or wraiths, or even those undead enterprising enough to range the Ethereal Plane. Each haunting presence is tied to an object or location and can only be dispelled by exorcism (see Exorcising a Haunting Presence, page 71) or the destruction of the object or location. Despite having no physicality, each haunting presence still possesses the identity of a specific kind of undead. For instance, one haunting presence might be similar to a vampire, while another is more like a wraith.

The Haunting: Whenever an undead appears as a haunting presence, it haunts an unattended, mundane object or location. The DM, using the same decision-making process as for populating an area with a standard monster, chooses an unattended, mundane object or location as the subject of a haunting presence. The DM also determines the variety of undead (skeleton, zombie, wraith, or whatever) that serves as the source of the haunting presence. An undead can haunt a discrete object of at least Tiny size and no larger than Huge size. Items (both magical and mundane) currently in the possession of a character (often referred to as attended items) cannot be haunted. Unattended magic items receive a saving throw as if a spell were being cast upon the item (DC 10 + 1/2 the undead's HD + the undead's Cha modifier).

A haunting presence becomes a part of the object or location haunted. Haunting presences are always aware of what is going on around the object that they haunt. They can see and hear up to 60 feet away (but do not gain blindsight). A haunting presence cannot be turned, rebuked, or destroyed

Shadow House

while the presence remains immaterial (but see Exorcising a Haunting Presence, below). Normal vulnerabilities of a particular kind of undead do not apply to the haunting presence of that undead. For instance, the haunting presence of a vampire haunting a fire poker is not destroyed if the poker is brought into sunlight.

Effects of a Haunting: A presence haunting an object can do so in a couple of ways. Undead of fewer than 5 Hit Dice can use only one form of haunting, but undead of 5 or more HD can make their presence known using either of two methods—impermanent home or poltergeist.

Impermanent Home: An undead presence haunting an object or an area can sometimes become more than a presence, actually taking corporeal or incorporeal form a number of times per week equal to the undead's Hit Dice (this includes haunting presences that manifest as incorporeal undead). The presence that takes form does so anywhere within the location it haunts, or in the closest empty space adjacent to the object it haunts. A presence that takes form can remain in its form for up to a number of minutes equal to its HD. An undead that takes form can choose at any time to return to its haunting presence status, but it must take a move action to do so.

While in physical form, the undead can take any actions normal for an undead of its kind. It can attack, take damage, and even be destroyed. If it is destroyed, the haunting presence is also permanently eradicated, unless it is a ghost, lich, or some other sort of undead resistant to destruction. Most undead will attempt to return to their haunting presence status if threatened with such destruction.

Poltergeist: If an object has parts that move (a wagon, a clock, or a crossbow are examples), a haunting presence can control the object's movement. The object will move no faster than the undead itself could move in its normal form. Thus, a wagon can be made to roll out of a stable with no horse pulling it or steer toward a pedestrian on a street. A clock can slow or run backward. A crossbow can cock and fire (but not aim or load itself).

An undead with at least 10 HD and a Charisma score of 17 or higher can actually force an object with no moving parts to animate (see animated objects on page 13 of the *Monster Manual*), based on the object's size. No undead, no matter how many Hit Dice or how high a Charisma score, can animate an object that has a higher Challenge Rating than its own.

If a location instead of an object is haunted, the haunting presence can animate a number of objects equal to its HD at one time.

Other Effects: No matter how the haunting presence makes itself felt, the haunting presence of a sentient undead can always choose to speak to nearby creatures, most often in a whispery or incoherent voice that seems to come from the air. However, haunting presences are usually not much for conversation. Characters might note at times that the object they have found or the location they inhabit has a strange air or an appearance that is somehow off (with a successful DC 15 Intelligence check).

Exorcising a Haunting Presence: No matter how a haunting presence chooses to reveal itself, it is subject to being discovered and destroyed. Unfortunately, a cleric's turning ability generally has no direct effect on haunting presences, other than to irritate them and focus their attention on the cleric. Something more is called for—an exorcist. Exorcism is a ritual, a spoken formula that calls upon one or more deities to drive out a haunting presence. Exorcism of a haunting presence is a two-step process—first, forcing a presence to become physical; then, once the undead has revealed itself, destroying it.

The haunting presence can be forced to reveal itself through the use of a special ritual, one that is generally known to anyone with ranks in Knowledge (religion). It must be performed by an exorcist who spends ten consecutive full-round actions chanting the exorcising formula, at the end of which time the exorcist must make a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check. If the exorcist's concentration is interrupted, the ritual must begin again. If the ritual is successful, the haunting presence becomes physical and must remain so for 1 full round. The exorcist's next action can be an attempt either to turn the revealed undead or to continue the ritual, with an additional DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check required at the end of each round. Each successful check forces the undead to remain in (corporeal or incorporeal) physical form for 1 additional round.

Even undead of 5 or fewer HD that normally haunt only as poltergeists are forced to take form by the exorcism ritual, as well as haunting presences that have already used up all their chances to take form for the week. Undead that are forced to take form usually use their actions to attempt to slay the exorcist before they themselves are destroyed, so exorcists generally bring along companions who can physically attack the revealed undead.

Haunted Sites

Traditionally, haunting refers to the presence of a ghost or similar undead creature, as described above. However, there might be reasons other than the direct activity of a creature that earn a site the reputation of being haunted. Some possibilities include the manifestation of an evil essence, a lingering curse, or the psychic resonance of terrible events that occurred in that place. These manifestations have more in common with dungeon hazards such as green slime than they do with actual ghosts, presenting a hazard or series of hazards but no foe that can be defeated.

Houses, castles, and cemeteries are common haunted sites—and houses or castles built atop catacombs or ancient cemeteries are particularly prone to haunting. Any place can become haunted, however: temples, farms, schools, shops and marketplaces, bridges, ships and caravans, and so on.

The manifestations of hauntings fall into two broad categories: illusion effects and telekinetic effects.

Illusion Effects: Phantom knocking, rattling chains, the stench of death filling the air—these are illusory manifestations. Generally, they are figments—equivalent to *ghost sound, silent image,* and related spells—that activate under certain circumstances or at specific times. The sound of a child crying might manifest whenever one character is alone in a certain room at night. The sound of rattling chains might seem to move up a staircase every night at midnight. Another common figment is the phantom reenactment of events that occurred on the site—often a traumatic event such as a murder or suicide. Characters who interact with a figment or other illusion effect can make Will saves to disbelieve the effect as if it were a comparable illusion spell.

Sometimes these manifestations are phantasms rather than figments, meaning that only a single character can perceive them. Occasionally they are patterns, visible to all onlookers but carrying mind-affecting side effects. Most phantasms and pattern hauntings cause characters who witness them to become affected by fear—characters who fail a Will save might become shaken (DC 12), frightened (DC 15), or panicked (DC 18). Phantasmal odors might instead cause a character to become sickened (Fortitude DC 13 negates) or nauseated (Fortitude DC 18 reduces to sickened). In their most dangerous manifestations, these effects can duplicate the *phantasmal killer* (DC 16) or *weird* (DC 23) spells.

Illusory manifestations can also be glamers. Torches might seem to dim or change color. A character's reflection in a mirror might seem to be doing something horrible, or it might look like someone else. A close friend might appear as a horrific monster.

Occasionally, haunting effects that seem illusory are at least partially real, like shadow spells, and can cause real harm to characters. The sensation of fingertips brushing the skin might be a phantasm and the feeling of someone walking past might be a figment, but the sense of a sharp blow or a wound could be a shadow and deal real damage (generally 1d6, but sometimes more). Similarly, a feeling of unnatural chill in a room could be a harmless figment, but it could also be a shadow effect that deals 1d4 points of Strength or Dexterity damage or bestows a negative level.

Telekinetic Effects: A haunting can duplicate any of the following spells: *mage hand, open/close, telekinesis, arcane lock,* or *knock*. Hauntings often manifest in objects moving around a room, doors and windows opening or closing at random, doors locking or unlocking on their own, and similar effects. When a character is subject to one of these effects, he receives a saving throw or other roll to resist it as if he were targeted by the spell being duplicated.

Taint and Hauntings: A character who spends the night in a haunted location must make a DC 20 Will save or have his depravity score increase by 1. The saving throw DC might be higher in more severe cases of haunting (see Tainted Locations on page 68).

Exorcising a Haunted Site: Just as in the case of a haunting presence, an exorcist can perform a ritual to cleanse a haunted site. If the exorcist successfully performs the ritual, which requires ten consecutive full-round actions and a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check, the haunting energies coalesce into a form that renders them vulnerable to traditional methods of removing magical effects, such as *dispel magic, remove curse,* or *break enchantment* spells. The effective caster level of a haunted site is the minimum caster level required to cast the highest-level spell duplicated by the haunting. With a successful ritual, the haunting energies remain vulnerable for 1 full round, but the exorcist can continue the ritual, causing the haunting energies to remain vulnerable, by making additional Knowledge (religion) checks each round. See Exorcising a Haunting Presence on page 71 for more details of the exorcism process.

MORTUARY TERRAIN

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* covers the basics of terrain, both in dungeons and in wilderness environments. A horror adventure might take characters to unusual terrain—in particular, places where the dead are buried. This section describes such locales, using the same format and terminology as in the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* Chapter 3: Adventures.

Graveyards

A far cry from the serene parks common in the modern world, graveyards in D&D range from quiet, spooky spots to dilapidated areas where putrescent liquids seep from the thin soil or rotting limbs protrude from overcrowded graves. The smell of death hangs thickly in the air.

Most graveyards occupy the yard outside a place of worship, commonly a temple of Wee Jas. They appear in civilized lands rather than wilderness areas, usually occupying open fields. The table below describes in general terms how likely it is that a given square has a terrain element in it. Instead of rolling for each square, use the percentages in the table below to guide the maps you create.

Graveyard Terrain Features

	—Age of Graveyard—		
	New	Moderate	Ancient
Gravestone	25%	50%	75%*
Mausoleum	5%	10%	20%*
Statue, memorial	10%	15%	20%*
Tree, massive	1	1	1
Tree, typical	5%	5%	5%
Vault	5%	10%	15%
Wall	5%	5%	5%*

*25% damaged in some way

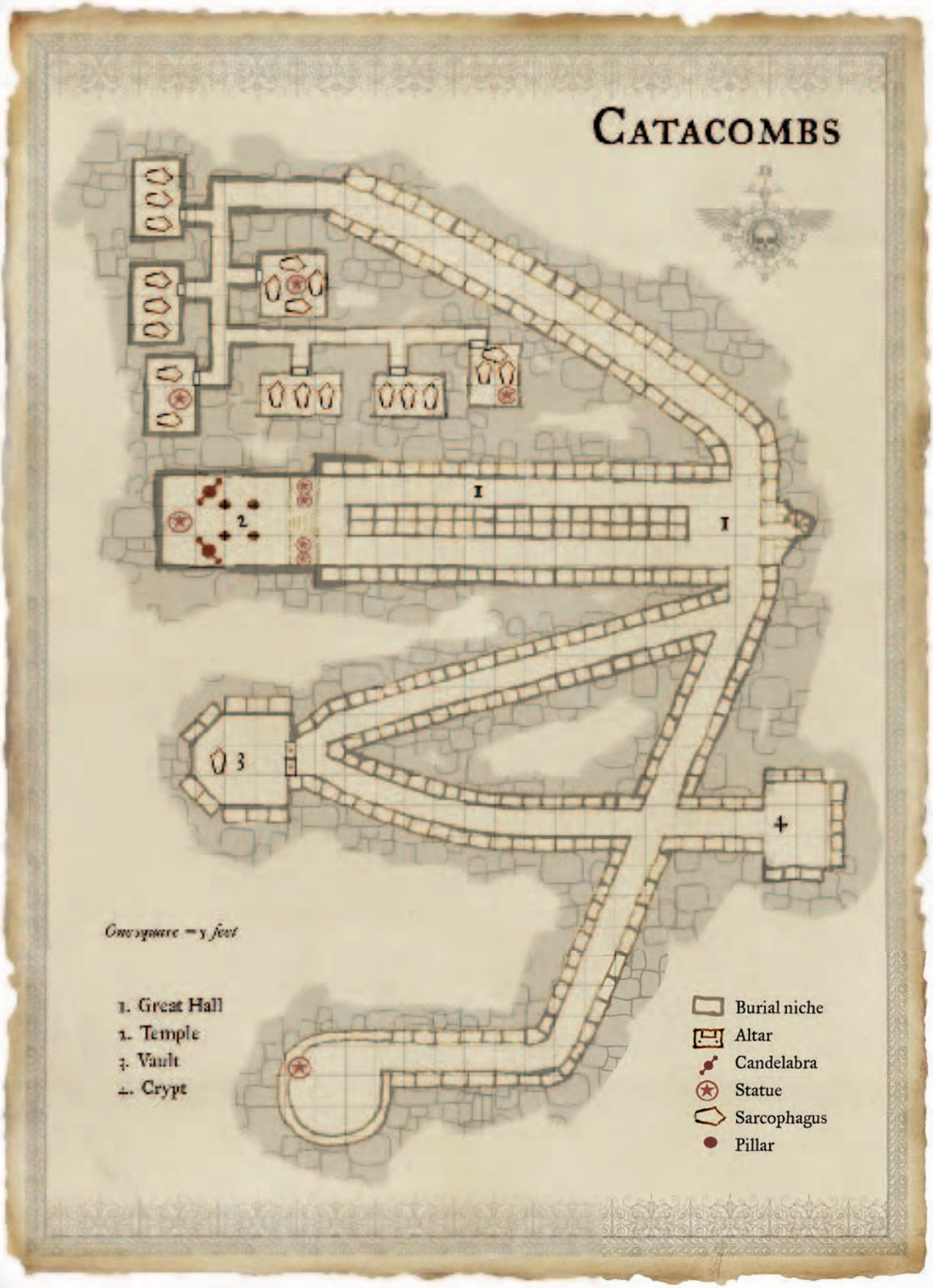
Gravestone: The older the cemetery, the more gravestones it will contain. The more neglected the cemetery, the more likely that some gravestones lean or have broken or fallen. A graveyard's boundaries are typically fixed when it is established, so fitting in more graves over time means packing the gravestones tightly together, possibly with multiple burials in each plot. When you decide to place a gravestone in a square, don't worry about the stone's exact location within the square. It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a square with a gravestone in it. A creature standing in the same square as a gravestone gains a +2 bonus to Armor Class and a +1 bonus on Reflex saves (these bonuses don't stack with cover bonuses from other sources). A typical gravestone has hardness 8 and 45 hp.

It is theoretically possible to perch atop a gravestone. A character can hop up to the top of a gravestone (see the Jump skill description on page 77 of the *Player's Handbook*) with a DC 10 Jump check. Perching on top of a gravestone can give a character the attack bonus for attacking from higher ground. Remaining perched requires balancing on a surface about 3 inches wide (Balance DC 15), which might be sloped (+2 to the DC), obstructed if the stone is old and crumbling (+2 to +5 to the DC), or slippery with rain or moss (another +2 to +5 to the DC). See the Balance skill description on page 67 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Some gravestones are placed flat on the ground rather than standing erect. These stones do not offer cover or affect movement in any way.

A cenotaph resembles a gravestone but is a memorial marker for those who do not lie buried there (for example, someone whose body was not recovered).

GRAVEYARD
1. Entrance hall
2. Priest's quarters
3. Dining area
4. Library
5. Storage
6. Vestry
7. General chapel
8. Private chapel
9. Mausoleum
10. Vault
11. Lich-gate
12. Charnel house
13. Crypt
14. Mass grave
15. Tall wall (5 feet high)
Altar
Brazier
Candelabra
Gravestone
Statue
Pillar
Sarcophagus
(Search DC 15)
One square = 5 feet


Catacombs
1
2
3
4
One square = 5 feet
1. Great Hall
2. Temple
3. Vault
4. Crypt
Burial niche
Altar
Candelabra
Statue
Sarcophagus
Pillar

Statue, Memorial: Statues are fairly common as elaborate grave markers for those wealthy enough to afford them. As described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 64), a statue functions as a wide pillar, taking up a square and providing cover. A DC 15 Climb check allows a character to climb a statue.

Tree: Many graveyards are kept clear of trees, but some have a scattering of trees and others might have a single massive tree growing inside their walls. (The "1" on the table represents the fact that it is unusual for more than one massive tree to appear in a graveyard.) See page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more information about trees as terrain elements.

Graveyard features

Wall: A graveyard is generally surrounded by a wall (sometimes called a lich wall). Walls are typically masonry, occasionally superior masonry, as described on page 59 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. They range in height from 4 feet to 8 feet tall.

A lich-gate is a small, roofed entry hall to a graveyard. It contains a platform to support the coffin while prayers are recited over the deceased. This platform, called a coffin rest, a corpse rest, or a lich-stone, is about 4 feet high, 2 feet wide, and 8 feet long. It is usually built from the same masonry as the wall.

Outside the walls of a graveyard can sometimes be found graves for suicides, criminals, foreigners, transients, or other people not deemed worthy to rest in the graveyard. Such an area is known as a potter's field. Undead are particularly common around these graves, which might not be consecrated in the same way as those within the graveyard.

Mausoleum: A mausoleum is a small, freestanding building, usually built of stone, for the interment of a single body or a group of bodies, such as members of a family. Mausoleums range widely in size, from just large enough to hold a single corpse to relatively spacious buildings with separate rooms for each member or branch of a family. Mausoleums are very much like small dungeons, usually with superior masonry walls (sometimes reinforced with iron, and intended to last for eternity), flagstone floors, and stone doors securely locked. Some mausoleums include a vault (see below).

A charnel house is similar to a mausoleum but is used to hold the remains of a large number of people who can't necessarily be identified. Sometimes individual corpses can't even be distinguished from one another, but remains are grouped together—skulls on one shelf, long bones on another, and so on.

Vault: A vault is an underground resting place, usually intended for the members of a single family. The entrance to a vault is often a secret door disguised as a gravestone that lies flat on the ground (Search DC 25). A flight of stairs from the entrance leads down into the vault, which is otherwise like a mausoleum.

A crypt is a vault that includes an altar. Such religious trappings often adorn the final resting places of saints (particularly martyrs), clerics, paladins, and other champions of a religion.

Other Graveyard Terrain Elements: A mass grave is a single excavation in which multiple bodies are buried. They are used when large numbers of people die within a short time—too many for individual burial (such as victims of a massacre or battle)—and sometimes lie outside the graveyard walls. Charnel pits, by contrast, contain remains dug up and reburied, sometimes sorted like bones in a charnel house. A plague pit is a mass grave dug deep for the burial of plague victims. Mass graves and charnel pits sometimes give rise to large undead formed from multiple corpses, such as corpse gatherers (described in *Monster Manual II*). When such undead form in plague pits, they invariably transmit the plague with their attacks.

Catacombs

If graveyards are the wilderness terrain of horror campaigns, catacombs are the dungeons. A catacomb is essentially an underground cemetery. Some catacombs are established in natural caves, while others are specifically excavated for burials. Generally, graves are cut into the walls, then sealed with bricks or tiles; sometimes graves are also dug in the floors. Graves in a catacomb might consist of simple shelves holding ossuaries (small boxes designed to hold only the bones of a cremated corpse) rather than enclosed spaces large enough to hold a complete body.

Walls: A catacomb built in natural caves has unworked stone walls—at least where graves have not yet been carved into those walls. Other catacombs have hewn stone or masonry walls. Graves carved into the walls and sealed shut are considered superior masonry walls. If shelves are cut into the catacomb walls, they make climbing much easier (Climb DC 10).

Doors: Doors are uncommon in catacombs, usually placed only to guard particularly important graves or chambers. Doors inside catacombs are almost always made of stone.

Chambers: A typical catacomb is a labyrinthine tangle of passages and small chambers excavated at different times over a long period. Vaults and crypts are common

Illus. by Daarken

chambers in catacombs. Some chambers might hold a single stone sarcophagus. A temple can sometimes form part of a catacomb—distinguished from a crypt by the lack of graves within it.

CAMPAIGN RULES

Dungeons & Dragons is, first and foremost, a game of heroic fantasy. That means that a few of the rules of the game are less appropriate in a horror campaign. Specifically, the rules regarding alignment, divinations, death, and injury are less conducive to true horror than they might be. Presented here are suggestions of how to alter, remove, or work around these rules, providing options both for those who want to change their campaigns and for those who want to make things work without major changes. These altered and optional rules are intended primarily for a long-term horror campaign rather than games in which horrific elements play only an occasional role.

ALIGNMENT

Horror concerns mystery and the unknown, secrets and lies, shades of gray and people forced into actions they abhor. The D&D alignment system, however, is a relatively concrete structure, representing actual, tangible forces of the multiverse. While you can run a horror game with the existing alignment system, some DMs and players find that altering or removing alignment heightens the intended mood.

Optional Rule: Behavioral Alignment

Under this optional system, alignment still exists, but it's not nearly as absolute as the core rules have it. Good, evil, law, and chaos do not exist as true universal forces. Rather, alignment simply measures a character's general attitudes toward life, the world, and the people around him. Good and Evil cease to exist as monster subtypes or spell descriptors, because beings and tools are defined by what they do and how they are used, not by an intrinsic moral value.

Guidelines and restrictions can still exist for certain character types, of course. A paladin still must be upright and honorable, help others, and in all ways uphold the tenets of the lawful good alignment. A barbarian still cannot be lawful. Demons are always chaotic evil. Such terms represent codes of conduct those characters must follow, or personality traits common to the race or class, rather than an overriding force to which the being is bound.

Some players might not even put an alignment on their character sheets, but just play a character as personality dictates. The alignment entries in the *Monster Manual* become guidelines, not rules. The average blue dragon is still going to behave in a manner normally associated with lawful evil, but because of his personality, not as an intrinsic part of his nature and not as a representative of some mystically detectable force.

When employing a behavioral alignment system, you must decide how to handle alignment-based spells such as *detect evil* and the various *magic circle* spells. The simplest option is to eliminate them from the game. Doing this removes a few options from the spell lists but, given the variety of spells available, it shouldn't have too deleterious an effect on casters.

Instead of eliminating alignment-based spells, you can adjust how they function. *Detect evil*, for instance, would detect intention, not inherent nature. It would only register someone while he was engaging in an evil activity. For example, a worshiper of Vecna passing poison to a lackey for use in killing the town mayor would register as evil because she's currently intent on murder. On the other hand, that same worshiper of Vecna browsing for a new pair of pants at the local tailor's shop would not be detected by the spell. He might even register as good when helping out a friend or ally. Certain individuals and creatures are so horrible, and have committed so many evil acts, that they would register as evil no matter what, but such beings should be few and far between. The various *magic circle* spells, on the other hand, could become a single spell that grants its benefits against any sentient being attacking the caster.

Behavioral alignment issues become trickier to handle with characters and creatures that have innate abilities based around alignment, such as smite evil or damage reduction xx/good. For abilities with limited uses per day, consider removing the target restrictions. A smite that functions against any enemy seems substantially more powerful than one that works only against evil creatures but in practice, considering how often paladins battle evil creatures, it makes little practical difference. Alternatively, smite evil might function only against those actively engaged in evil acts. (Participating in a raid to plunder, rape, and murder the citizens of a small town qualifies. Attacking the paladin herself might not automatically qualify, depending on circumstances.)

Damage reduction could default to magic, or involve brand-new categories. For instance, consider divine damage reduction, in which case a cleric or paladin expends a use of turn undead to charge the weapon with divine power for a number of rounds equal to his turning level plus his Charisma modifier. For the duration, the weapon (which need not be wielded by the cleric or paladin himself) can overcome the creature's damage reduction.

BEHAVIORAL OR RELATIVE ALIGNMENT

Note that the behavioral or internal alignment system under discussion is not the same thing as a relative alignment system. Behavioral alignment, as presented here, represents codes of personal conduct rather than fundamental forces, but the alignment definitions still hold true. That is, certain behaviors are always defined as good (helping others whether or not you benefit from it) or evil (hurting others whether or not you benefit from it), as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

By contrast, under a relative alignment system nothing is absolute. Different cultural norms and definitions apply. Activities considered evil—slavery, murder, cannibalism—could be viewed as acceptable by some fantasy societies. It becomes literally impossible to define good or evil except on a case-by-case basis that takes into account all cultural norms and background.

While it's certainly possible to play Dungeons & Dragons with relative alignments, doing so changes the game on a fundamental level and is well beyond the scope of this work.

Why go through the trouble of moving to a more abstract behavioral alignment system? Because it creates uncertainty, which is essential to many forms of horror story. It prevents easy discovery of the villain or hidden monster through the use of alignment-detecting spells. Perhaps more important, it adds depth and complexity to motives. "Because he's evil" is no longer a viable explanation for a villain's behavior. Did the killer bear a grudge of some kind? Was he acting on behalf of someone else? Was he possessed?

Behavioral alignment also grants the PCs more freedom of choice. One common theme of horror is the temptation of the hero. Whether it's because the situation has grown so dire that he must take steps he would not normally take, or because he has been tempted by a prize so enticing he might choose to stifle the voice of his conscience, the protagonist in horror stories often takes actions he regrets down the road. Players who feel that alignment is binding might be unwilling to portray such actions, even if they feel that doing so is appropriate to the story. With a more abstract system, however, they're more likely to allow their characters to take such risks.

This application of alignment holds true for NPCs, too. A formerly virtuous or trustworthy ally might commit some evil act out of desperation or temptation, without "turning evil" per se. The same archmage, or general, or genie proves to be a villain in some circumstances and an ally in others, without the heroes knowing his true motives. Finally, it encourages alliances, friendships, and even romantic relationships between PCs and NPCs, because the "Oh, I wouldn't hook up with him, he's evil" factor no longer applies.

Replacing Alignment with Taint

If you intend to make substantial use of the new taint mechanic (see page 62) in your campaign, consider using taint to replace alignment. Unlike alignment, taint does not use sets of opposites (good against evil, law against chaos) in its descriptions. Either you're tainted or you're not.

In such a system, tainted characters are evil or on their way to becoming evil—a threat to the people and possibly to entire nations. Characters without taint can act altruistically or selfishly, kindly or cruelly, generously or stingily, as their qualities dictate. An evil monster has a taint score equal to one-half its Charisma score; evil undead gain a +1 modifier, and evil outsiders a +2 modifier.

In this sort of campaign, the various spells to detect alignment should be replaced with *detect taint,* and protection spells such as *magic circle against chaos* become *magic circle against taint.* The various *smite* abilities now function against tainted creatures (or untainted creatures, if possessed by something that is innately tainted or has embraced taint).

Taint could even be responsible for the existence of certain types of monsters and templates that have other sources in standard campaigns. For instance, the ritual to become a lich could require the caster be tainted (or might itself taint the caster). A cruel fighter whose taint exceeds his Wisdom becomes a wereboar. Perhaps chromatic dragons resulted from metallic dragons who became corrupted in eons past.

Because taint is a threat to everyone, heroic characters might ally with evil or selfish ones to battle a common enemy. However, not all such alliances are going to end well. Villains might not actually be tainted, just evil in personality and behavior, and a story could involve a three-way struggle between the heroes, a band of tainted villains or monsters, and the forces of evil, as represented by a spiteful and malevolent—but untainted—NPC.

Working Around Alignment

If you choose to keep alignment as written in your horror campaign, you're faced with a different problem. Namely, how do you maintain tension and mystery in the face of spells and even innate class abilities capable of detecting the presence of evil? You could, of course, remove such spells—and some campaigns might function better that way—but that rather defeats the purpose of trying to work within the system.

First off, any intelligent and knowledgeable being is going to be aware of the existence of alignment-detecting spells and take any steps he can to avoid them. Any spellcasting villain attempting to remain hidden will take advantage of spells like *undetectable alignment.* If every villain employs this tactic, players are likely to grow frustrated with alignment-detecting spells and abilities that are essentially worthless. On an occasional basis, however, don't hesitate to let your villains magically shroud their malevolence, particularly if it makes sense for the character.

Second, make use of villains for whom alignment is not an issue. A vengeful ghost slaughtering people in a crowded neighborhood isn't going to care that the PCs can detect its alignment, since it has so many other ways of avoiding or escaping them. A psychotic killer doesn't have it in him to care if anyone knows him for what he is. (And in fact, if he's truly crazy, one could make an argument that he's not evil at all, in the strictest sense of the term.)

Detecting alignment is all but useless when it comes to creatures capable of possessing others. The captain of the town guard could be an upstanding person. It doesn't make him any less of a killer while he's under the influence of a possessing demon. He won't register to alignment-detecting spells unless he's actively possessed, and if the heroes do catch him while he's being ridden, the demon can always abandon the body. In fact, tricking or forcing the good guys to kill an innocent whose only crime was to be chosen for possession is icing on the cake for creatures of this nature.

Third, make use of villains who are not truly evil. Constructs and mindless undead can serve an evil being, but they are not themselves evil. Properly built or disguised, they can pass for human, at least at a distance. Animals trained or controlled to attack others can wreak havoc in a city or town without being sensed by alignment-detecting spells.

Finally, so what if the PCs can detect alignment? Surely the deranged killer, the foreign assassin, or the cultist of Demogorgon are not the only evil people in town. Can the heroes just go out and start killing? It's highly unlikely that the city watch would take kindly to that. For that matter, alignment-detecting spells probably aren't admissible as evidence of wrongdoing in most D&D-setting societies. After all, being evil doesn't necessarily make someone a lawbreaker (particularly if the character is lawful evil). Combine that with the fact that so many means exist for misdirecting or fooling these spells, and the law has probably written off

alignment-detecting spells as circumstantial evidence at most. PCs who assume that they can attack the suspected villain openly because he triggered the paladin's sense of evil might well find themselves on the wrong side of a dungeon door.

DIVINATION

Not all horror games are mysteries, but many are. And few things cause more headaches for a DM running a mystery game than the various divination spells. Players with access to such magic can uncover clues and jump ahead in plots far more swiftly than the DM intended. Without proper preparation, divination can ruin the tension and buildup of a story, or even a whole campaign.

In most cases, it's inappropriate to cut divination from the game. It plays too large a part in the various spell lists, and has a great many vital (but not game-breaking) uses. The best option for most campaigns, although it does require a balancing act, is for the DM to reward inventive use of divination while ensuring that the spells do not sweep away the need for investigation and creative thinking.

Always keep in mind the precise parameters of divination spells. *Detect thoughts* might seem a good way of picking a killer out of a crowd, but it allows a Will save. Against mindless targets or those who are honestly unaware of their actions, it's completely useless. *Clairaudience/clairvoyance* has limited range and can spy only on a specific location.

The spells that really challenge DMs, then, are spells such as *commune, discern location, scrying,* and *true seeing.* Again, by keeping their restrictions in mind you can work around them without making them useless.

Commune answers yes/no questions only, and truly obscure information might be unknown to the deity.

Discern location is a powerful tool, but it functions only if the caster has seen or touched the person or object in question or has something belonging to the individual. The spell reveals only where the being or object is right now. If the caster realizes that the werewolf he's seeking (currently in human form) is standing in the middle of a crowded tavern, that doesn't tell him which of the three-dozen occupants is the one he seeks. Given the phrasing of the spell description (*Player's Handbook*, page 222), a DM could say that, if the caster does not have something belonging to the target, he must know the actual identity of the individual he's trying to find. For example, "the person or creature who killed the mayor" is not a viable target of the spell. Only by using the target's name, or some other title specifically associated with the target, can the caster utilize *discern location*.

The *scrying* spell is equally limited. The subject gains a Will save, and the bonuses to that save are substantial if the caster does not know the individual well. Even if the caster succeeds, he might not be able to obtain what he needs from the *scrying* spell. Unless he knows the area well, seeing everything within 10 feet of the subject isn't likely to provide an actual location. Furthermore, he can only see; anything the subject says or hears remains hidden.

Finally, *true seeing* is useful for penetrating illusions and detecting shapeshifters, but only if the caster knows when to use it. One minute per level is a long time in combat, but not long at all during an ongoing investigation.

Of course, intelligent villains are likely to be aware that all these techniques are available to their enemies. If they, too, are spellcasters, they will almost certainly make use of the many disguising and misleading spells intended to block divination magic. Those who aren't casters could have access to various magic items that duplicate these blocking abilities. They will almost certainly scry on the PCs as much as the PCs scry on them.

Such villains will be careful to leave nothing of theirs behind at the scene of a crime, or to make certain that the interior of their lair offers no clues to its location. Particularly clever villains might even leave behind items that belong to someone else, or disguise themselves and even their homes to deflect suspicion. Spell-savvy NPCs augment magical disguises with mundane ones, knowing full well that *true seeing* can penetrate illusions but cannot see through makeup.

Be aware, however, that if every villain or mysterious creature is cloaked against divination magic, your players will grow frustrated, and rightly so. At least in some instances, you should not merely allow divination to function, you should require it. Work it into the story. Perhaps a cleric acquiring victims for sacrifice only approaches his shrine when nobody is watching, so the PCs must stake it out with *clairvoyance*. A mysterious item left behind might be the only clue to an assassin's identity, and only *legend lore* can reveal what the item is. A teleporting demon can be anywhere in the world, and only *discern location* gives the PCs a fighting chance of finding it. These spells exist in D&D for a reason; proper adjudication of their use in a horror/mystery game can enhance, rather than detract from, the experience.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Death is not an ending in mid- to high-level D&D games. Spells such as *raise dead, reincarnate,* and *resurrection* ensure that a player need not lose a beloved character due to bad luck in combat. In most cases, there's still a penalty to pay—in the form of level loss, if nothing else—but the character otherwise comes back hale and hearty.

Easy access to resurrection magic is appropriate for high adventure games, but it might not work well for those who want darker elements and the fear of death to play a part in their campaigns. For a horror campaign, consider the following options. (And be certain you reveal these changes to your players before it comes up.)

No Resurrection Magic

If you decide that magic cannot return the dead to life, the game becomes more dangerous but there are no other far-reaching effects. You might find, however, that players grow upset if a favorite character dies in a stupid or unfortunate manner. Few players mind if their characters die heroically or in a character-appropriate way, but after a night of bad luck and a whole mess of natural 1s in combat, a permanent end on top of it all—even if appropriate for the feel of the campaign—may not sit well.

Resurrection Is Difficult

Perhaps the most flavorful option for a horror campaign is to make resurrection possible, but far more daunting a prospect than simply casting a spell and (perhaps) taking a loss of some

experience points. Under such a system, the task of bringing the dead back to life becomes extremely complex, and carries with it no small element of risk.

Some possible means of altering resurrection magic are presented below. You can use one of them or choose to combine several of these alterations, as best suits your campaign.

Casting Time: The ritual to summon the dead back to life is long and complex. It requires hours, rather than minutes, to cast.

Location: Resurrections cannot be performed just anywhere. The body of the deceased must be brought to a particular location before the ritual can be completed. This might be a temple devoted to the god of the dead or to the character's own god. It might be a pit deep in the earth, spiritually close to the underworld, or a mountaintop that nearly penetrates the heights of heaven. A simple DC 15 Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge check is sufficient to tell the caster where he must take the body, but geting there—particularly within the time limits of the *raise dead* spell for mid-level casters—may prove a challenge.

Balancing the Scales: For one to live, another must die, and the caster and his companions must send a new soul to the underworld to take the place of the one they're calling back. At its simplest, this can be any sentient soul, but that might make things too easy on the PCs. All they need do is find a vicious highwayman or goblinoid raider—someone they can justify slaying. Far better to offer them a more difficult choice or task.

Perhaps the sacrifice must be a willing volunteer, fully aware that he is giving his life for the deceased and choosing to do so anyway. Perhaps the god of the dead demands that the sacrificial victim be of the same alignment, or worship the same god, as the deceased. Can PCs justify slaying a lawful good being in order to raise their paladin companion? How would he react to the knowledge that they had done so?

In a horror campaign, resurrection doesn't always summon the soul it's meant to.

Quest for the Dead: Perhaps resurrection requires a bargain with the god of the dead, or a quest into the underworld itself. The heroes might have to plead with a deity to release their friend's soul, and he might require a task from them in exchange. Alternatively, the players might have to find a route into the underworld, locate their companion's spirit, and bring him out. This is the most complex of the available options, since it requires a side-quest that could take many games to complete, but it can also add substantial tension and atmosphere to the game. The PCs might not need to cast a resurrection spell at all to retrieve their friend's soul, or the spell might still be required to remove the soul once they've found it or to reattach it to a physical body.

Coming Back Wrong: Resurrection might not work perfectly. Sometimes, the individual who returns to life is changed by the experience. Sometimes, the individual who returns to life isn't the person the caster wanted at all.

When attempting to return the dead to life, the caster must succeed on a Knowledge (religion) or Spellcraft check. The DC is equal to 15 plus either the number of days the victim has been dead (for *raise dead* or *reincarnate*) or the number of decades the victim has been dead (for *resurrection* or *true resurrection*). The DM makes this roll, not the player. Unlike most Skill checks, a natural 1 is always a failure, regardless of modifiers. If the result is a success, the spell works normally. If the check is a failure, however, the DM should roll d% and consult the following table. (This mishap is in addition to the standard level loss.)

Resurrection Is Unchanged

If you choose not to alter the way resurrection works in your horror campaign, how can you maintain the fear of death?

Rely on your villain to be smart enough to recognize that the characters have access to resurrection magic.

Resurrection is expensive. Materials for resurrection cost a bundle, not to mention the fact that all forms but *true resurrection* cost the subject a level. Even if heroes don't stay dead, these costs can delay them in gaining sufficient power to confront the villain or foil his schemes.

An intelligent villain might consider ways and means of depleting the PCs' resources (by theft or property destruction, if the characters own a business). Empty coin pouches can mean a costly resurrection is out of reach.

When the party is down by a member—even temporarily—a smart villain can sense it's time to strike. PCs occupied with restoring a companion to life won't be on hand to prevent the massacre of innocents or the assassination of a ruler. The consequences of death remain very real, even if one particular death was not permanent.

Circumstances might not permit normal resurrection magic to work. A hero whose body is lost or destroyed can only be called back with *true resurrection*, a 9th-level spell. An intelligent villain knows to destroy the bodies of his enemies if he has the chance, or to steal them away and hide them.

Finally, you might consider demanding the character explain why he would choose to come back to life. In

Illus. by E. Polak

Resurrection Mishaps

d%	Result
01–04	The subject has an unusually cold touch that, while harmless, lingers in an uncomfortable fashion long after contact has been broken.
05–08	The subject's eyes change in color, tint, size, or shape.
09–11	The subject smells of freshly dug earth—comforting to druids, perhaps, but unsettling to urban characters.
12–16	The subject's fingernails and hair become brittle and colorless.
17–20	The subject becomes reckless, feeling that death is no longer to be feared.
21–24	The subject becomes overly cautious, fearfully holding on to his second chance at life.
25–28	The subject becomes more generous and caring, feeling that his second chance is best used serving the greater good.
29–32	The subject becomes more selfish, withdrawn, and possessive. This outcome works well if the PCs divvied up the character's belongings before he was brought back.
33–36	The subject becomes fascinated with death and seeks others who have returned from death to share stories and experiences.
37–40	One of the subject's feats has been swapped for a different one. If the subject has a list of spells known (like a sorcerer) then one of the spells has changed, too.
41–44	The subject has a split personality. One of the personalities is the one from the previous life and the second is the personality of someone else who died very near the subject at some point in the past.
45–48	The subject is followed by a shadow creature that wants to kill him and those who raised him.
49–52	The subject is now owned by some extraplanar entity and must do its bidding as though summoned.
53–56	The subject is phobic of things that represent death (think of Imhotep's reaction to the cat in *The Mummy*).
57–60	The subject develops a taste for raw flesh (or for maggots, rotting flesh, or another repugnant viand).
61–64	The subject carries the look of someone who has died, with too-pale flesh, dull eyes, or some other haggard feature.
65–68	The subject develops an abiding interest in religion (or redoubles his interest, if already religious).
69–72	The subject talks about how death still wants, and is waiting for him.
73–76	The subject spurns wealth and possessions, feeling they have no value to one who walks beyond death.
77–80	The subject seeks to ease the suffering of the dead, tending to the respectful burial of even his most hated enemies.
81–84	From time to time, the subject suddenly babbles in unknown languages, or channels an unearthly voice.
85–88	The subject sleepwalks, even attacking people in his sleep (although usually unarmed).
89–92	The subject has a body part or patch of skin that remains dead/rotting/discolored and smells of carrion.
93–96	The subject has horrible nightmares that disturb his sleep; he requires an extra 2 to 4 hours of rest to be fully rested.
96–100	If the campaign is using taint mechanics, the subject is tainted by the passage from death to life and gains 1d4 points of taint. In addition, roll again on this table for a second result.

many fantasy settings, the afterlife is a reward. What would cause someone to abandon the comforts of heaven to return to a life of struggle?

NPCs have access to resurrection too, of course. While this technique can be abused, it's certainly viable every now and again to bring back a villain the PCs believe they killed.

VIOLENCE AND TAINT

Perhaps the single most dramatic change you could make to a horror campaign is to take the approach that violence itself engenders taint. In horror stories, violence often begets violence and causes far more problems than it solves. Under these circumstances, unnecessary cruelty in killing an animal, or killing a sentient being under any circumstances, bestows 1 point of taint on the character. The taint gained in this fashion is depravity, but characters might gain corruption for using unnatural magic or for killing in intensely mystical, holy, or profane regions.

Clearly, in a tainted violence campaign, combat will be less frequent than normal—waged only under the most desperate circumstances. Quests for atonement will be frequent and vital for the characters' survival. Most important, the DM must completely rethink methods of offering experience points. The bulk of XP should come from story awards, granted when the PCs accomplish set tasks, make important discoveries, and the like. You can still offer encounter-based awards as well—after all, the PCs still learn from combat, even if they also suffer negative consequences. Consider offering more experience, however, if the PCs find creative ways of defeating their foes without fighting them—by banishing the demon, arranging for the villain's arrest, solving whatever problem the ghost left unfinished in life, and the like. On average, consider offering 25% more experience points for overcoming a challenge in this fashion.

To particularly reinforce the notion that violence is not a solution, consider combining this technique with liberal use of the soul-locked creature, as described under Sometimes They Come Back (see page 47).

THE LESSER EVIL

If linking taint to violence changes the game too radically for your taste, consider finding a middle ground. Killing in self-defense, for example, or slaying innately evil creatures when PCs have no other choice, does not bestow taint. However, taint ensues from murdering innocents, unnecessary cruelty in slaying evil beings, or killing evil creatures despite having other options for defeating them. This middle ground keeps violence tied to horror and encourages players to seek alternative methods without being quite as draconian about it.

Illus. by E. Polak

The player characters in a horror adventure or campaign might be heroes in the traditional sense of the word: good-aligned characters struggling against the evil of the world while remaining true to their ideals and alignment. Such characters might acquire taint through no fault of their own but simply through exposure to so much corruption and evil—but they never embrace taint, instead seeking to purge it from themselves as quickly as possible. They smite evil and turn undead, using all the might that the forces of good have to offer (perhaps drawing on the *Book of Exalted Deeds* for resources) in the course of their crusade. This type of horror game is closest to a standard D&D game, and it is similar to such examples of the horror genre as the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television series.

Alternatively, player characters in a horror game might be antiheroes. In literature, film, and comic books, an antihero is a protagonist who commands the sympathy of the reader (or viewer) while displaying flaws, failures, and questionable moral values. An antihero might have some great tragedy or dark secret in his past, or he might make use of evil means toward an ultimately good end. In D&D, such a character is probably neither good nor evil but a flexible neutral. A cleric of St. Cuthbert who launches an inquisition to purge evil from the land, killing innocents in the process; a devotee of Wee Jas who animates undead in order to fight villains even more evil; a ranger hunting down all the agents, evil or otherwise, of the baron who burned down his childhood home—these are all examples of antiheroes appropriate to a dark, horrific D&D campaign. The resources in *Book of Exalted Deeds* are not for these characters. Characters such as these are certain to acquire taint as their adventures unfold. Unlike more traditional heroes, they might embrace that taint in order to use the power it offers for their ultimately good ends. If *Buffy* exemplifies a heroic horror story, its companion series *Angel* is a fine example of an antiheroic story in the same vein.

Many of the resources in this chapter—new base classes, prestige classes, feats, spells, and artifacts—are designed specifically for antiheroic characters (as well as for villains). Such evil tools always come with a cost, however, and players and DM alike are reminded that antiheroes in fiction and cinema rarely escape paying that cost. The classic fantasy antihero, Michael Moorcock's Elric of Melniboné, summons the lords of Chaos, wields black magic, and wades into battle swinging the demonic soul-eating sword Stormbringer—and ultimately ends up destroyed by his own weapon after having brought to ruin everything he ever cherished. Characters who embrace taint might find themselves wielding enormous power for a time, but corruption eats at their bodies even as depravity gnaws at their souls. They end up either wholly given over to evil or mercifully slain at the hands of their own companions before the taint can utterly take control.

Classes

Two new classes, the archivist and the dread necromancer, take different approaches to adventuring in a world filled with taint. The archivist studies forbidden lore out of an unending quest for knowledge, while the dread necromancer masters spells relating to creating and controlling the undead—eventually becoming undead herself.

ARCHIVIST

"You can either sell me the cursed stele, or you can wait for its original owner to come for it. The choice is yours."

—Anselmo Durod, proctor abbot of the Hallowed Doctrine

An archivist is a wielder of divine magic, similar to a cleric only in the type and nature of the magic at his command. Indeed, the archivist has more in common with the wizard than he does with the standard servant of the divine, due to the scholarly way in which he collects and maintains his spell selection. Archivists seek out esoteric sources of divine lore, wherever those sources might be, securing those secrets for themselves and their fellow scholars.

MAKING AN ARCHIVIST

The archivist is a more academic profession than the cleric or paladin but hardier and more worldly than the average cloistered wizard. Due to the exploratory and often dangerous nature of their work, archivists develop techniques for safeguarding themselves and their allies from the foul taint that so often surrounds and accompanies the lost or forbidden lore they seek. Archivists are thus exceptional support characters, bolstering the efforts of those who aid them in their scholarly pursuits.

Abilities: The most important characteristic for an archivist is a keen Intelligence. That intellect must also be tempered with a high degree of Wisdom, due to the fine line the archivist must walk in studying evil without being corrupted by it. A strong Constitution is also highly prized for dealing with the rigors of the archivist's missions.

Races: Elves tend to make the best archivists, due both to their longevity and to their natural proclivity for magic. Humans and gnomes can be drawn to the class as well, often becoming the most ambitious of seekers. Dwarves make fine archivists but tend to view the entire profession as a little too morally gray for their liking. Halflings and half-orcs rarely take up the mantle of the archivist.

Alignment: Characters of any alignment can become archivists, but the class does require some measure of academic detachment. As a result, archivists of an ethically lawful bent are quite common.

CLASS FEATURES

The archivist's class features all serve to further his overall purpose, which is to seek out mystical, divine lore from strange and forbidden sources, and to gain both understanding and mastery thereof.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Archivists are proficient with all simple weapons and with light and medium armor, but not with shields.

Spellcasting: An archivist casts divine spells, drawn primarily from the cleric spell list although he can eventually uncover, learn, and prepare noncleric divine spells spells. Unlike clerics, archivists prepare spells from a prayerbook, a collection of copied divine spells. To learn, prepare, or cast a spell, an archivist must have an Intelligence score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against an archivist's spell is 10 + the spell level + the archivist's Int modifier.

Table 5–1: The Archivist **Hit Die: d6**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	—Spellcasting— 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Dark knowledge (tactics) 3/day, Scribe Scroll	3	2								
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Lore mastery	4	3								
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	Dark knowledge 4/day	4	3	2							
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Still mind	4	4	3							
5th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Dark knowledge (puissance)	4	4	3	2						
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Dark knowledge 5/day	4	4	4	3						
7th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Lore mastery	4	5	4	3	2					
8th	+4	+6	+2	+6	Dark knowledge (foe)	4	5	4	4	3					
9th	+4	+6	+3	+6	Dark knowledge 6/day	4	5	5	4	3	2				
10th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Bonus feat	4	5	5	4	4	3				
11th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Dark knowledge (dread secret)	4	5	5	5	4	3	2			
12th	+6/+1	+8	+4	+8	Dark knowledge 7/day	4	5	5	5	4	4	3			
13th	+6/+1	+8	+4	+8	Lore mastery	4	5	5	5	5	4	3	2		
14th	+7/+2	+9	+4	+9	Dark knowledge (foreknowledge)	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	3		
15th	+7/+2	+9	+5	+9	Dark knowledge 8/day	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	2	
16th	+8/+3	+10	+5	+10	—	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	
17th	+8/+3	+10	+5	+10	Lore mastery	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	2
18th	+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	Dark knowledge 9/day	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	3
19th	+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	—	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
20th	+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	Bonus feat	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Concentration, Craft, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Heal, Knowledge (all skills, taken individually), Profession, Search, and Spellcraft.

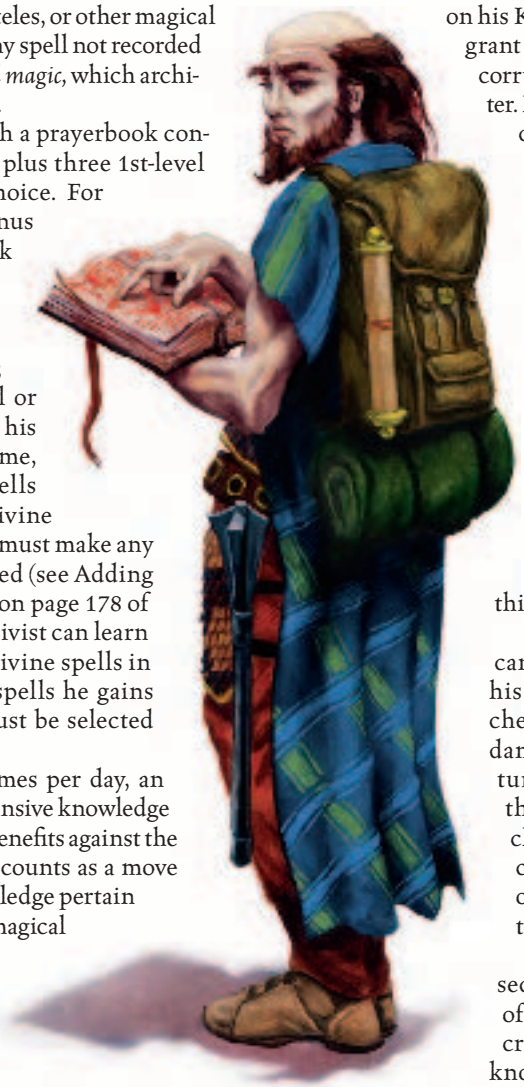
Like other spellcasters, an archivist can cast only a certain number of spells of each level per day. His base daily allotment is given in Table 5–1: The Archivist. In addition, he receives bonus spells per day if he has a high Wisdom score (see Table 1–1 on page 8 of the *Player's Handbook*). He must choose and prepare his spells ahead of time by getting a good night's sleep and then spending 1 hour studying his prayerbook. The archivist decides which spells to prepare while studying.

Prayerbook: Unlike a cleric, an archivist does not receive his daily spell complement from whatever deity or cosmic force he worships. Rather, he must seek out and collect new spells much as a wizard does, but from such esoteric sources as holy tablets, ancient steles, or other magical scriptures. He cannot prepare any spell not recorded in his prayerbook except for *read magic*, which archivists can prepare from memory.

An archivist begins play with a prayerbook containing all 0-level cleric spells plus three 1st-level cleric spells of the player's choice. For each point of Intelligence bonus the archivist has, the prayerbook has an additional 1st-level cleric spell. At each new class level, the archivist gains two new cleric spells for his prayerbook; these can be of any spell level or levels that he can cast (based on his new archivist level). At any time, an archivist can also add spells found on scrolls containing divine spells to his prayerbook, but he must make any rolls and spend the time required (see Adding Spells to a Wizard's Spellbook on page 178 of the *Player's Handbook*). The archivist can learn and thus prepare nonclerical divine spells in this fashion but the two free spells he gains for advancing in class level must be selected from the cleric spell list.

Dark Knowledge: Three times per day, an archivist can draw upon his expansive knowledge of monsters, granting his allies benefits against the creatures they face. Doing this counts as a move action. The secrets of dark knowledge pertain only to aberrations, elementals, magical beasts, outsiders, or undead.

An archivist unlocks new dark knowledge abilities as his level increases and can also call upon his dark knowledge more often, gaining one additional daily use for every three archivist levels (4/day at 3rd level, 5/day at 6th level, and so forth).



Anselmo Durod, archivist

Illus. by R. Gallegos

Using dark knowledge requires a Knowledge check of a type appropriate to the creature faced. A Knowledge (arcana) check reveals secrets of magical beasts, Knowledge (dungeoneering) pertains to aberrations, Knowledge (religion) covers undead, and Knowledge (the planes) applies to outsiders and elementals. The DC of the check is 15. Most of the archivist's dark knowledge abilities increase in effectiveness if he succeeds on his Knowledge check by 10 or more. Dark knowledge can only be used once against any given creature.

The archivist's dark knowledge can affect a single creature or all creatures of the same race, depending on the effect used. A target creature must be within 60 feet, and the archivist must be aware of the creature's presence, although he need not have a line of sight to it. The effects of dark knowledge last for 1 minute, unless stated otherwise.

Tactics: The archivist knows the general combat behaviors of creatures of that race, granting his allies a +1 bonus to attack rolls made against them. For example, an archivist confronted by corruption eaters* who succeeded on his Knowledge (dungeoneering) check would grant his allies the attack bonus against all the corruption eaters they fought in that encounter. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 10 or more, then this bonus increases to +2. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 20 or more, then this bonus increases to +3.

*New monster described on page 144.

Puissance: Starting at 5th level, the archivist can use his dark knowledge to help his allies fight off the corrupting influence of other creatures. Allies within 60 feet of the archivist gain a +1 bonus on saving throws against the affected creature's abilities. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 10 or more, this bonus increases to +2. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 20 or more, this bonus increases to +3.

Foe: Starting at 8th level, an archivist can direct his allies to attack vital spots of his enemies. On a successful Knowledge check, he grants them a bonus to weapon damage rolls made against the target creatures equal to 1d6 points of damage. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 10 or more, then this bonus increases to 2d6. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 20 or more, then this bonus increases to 3d6.

Dread Secret: By speaking aloud a dread secret of the target creature, an archivist of 11th level or higher can dazzle a target creature for 1 round. Unlike other dark knowledge, this ability can be used only against a single creature. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 10 or more, then the target is dazed for 1 round. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 20 or more, then the target is stunned for 1 round (if the target is immune to being stunned but not immune to being dazed, such as most undead, then the archivist can choose to daze the target instead of stunning it).

Foreknowledge: Starting at 14th level, an archivist can better prepare his allies for the attacks of the affected creature, making it harder for the creature to land blows

and successfully deal damage. Allies within 30 feet of the archivist gain a +1 insight bonus to Armor Class that applies to attacks by the affected creature only. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 10 or more, this bonus increases to +2. If the archivist succeeds on his Knowledge check by 20 or more, this bonus increases to +3.

Scribe Scroll: Archivists gain Scribe Scroll as a bonus feat.

Lore Mastery: Upon reaching 2nd level, an archivist gains a +2 bonus to all Decipher Script checks and to all checks of any one Knowledge skill of his choice. Once this choice is made, it cannot be changed. At 7th, 13th, and 17th level, the archivist can choose an additional Knowledge skill on which to gain the +2 bonus.

Still Mind (Ex): Starting at 4th level, an archivist gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against spells and effects from the school of enchantment, due to his rigorous focus and intense mental discipline.

Bonus Feat: When an archivist reaches 10th level, and again at 20th level, he can select a free feat from the following list: Skill Focus (any Knowledge skill), Spell Focus, any metamagic feat, or any item creation feat.

PLAYING AN ARCHIVIST

As an archivist, you travel in search of new and unusual magic of a divine nature. Since your understanding of magic revolves around the written word, you prize magical writings of any kind and will travel far to investigate a newly uncovered (or yet-to-be-discovered) holy scripture or mystical recitation. Generally speaking, you aren't quite as stuffy as the average wizard, given your breadth of experience and high Wisdom score, but neither are you a chest-thumping champion of the gods. The secrets you uncover are their own reward, and your confidence in yourself and in the job you do is more rewarding than the empty gratitude of some group or hierarchy.

Religion

While most archivists are religious, it is fundamentally their way to put more stock in the power of the divine than in the divine itself. Archivists exist for virtually every known deity. Some hunt down the secrets of ages past to exalt the greater glory of their deity, while others seek only to safeguard sacred lore from falling into the wrong hands. Still others see very little connection between their personal devotion and the work they do, aside from perceiving their continued success as evidence of their god's favor.

Other Classes

Archivists tend to fare well in the company of wizards, who appreciate the scholarly approach they take to magical study. By the same token, however, they have a mercurial relationship with standard clerics. Some priesthoods view archivists as an essential arm of their god's following, while others see them as little more than shameless thieves who seek to despoil or abuse sacred texts. Many druids look askance at their spells' being cast by those who do not follow druidic teachings. Archivists often travel in the company of bards or rogues (another mark against them in the eyes of some narrow-minded priests), who share their interest in old lore and the recovery of long-lost treasure.

Combat

Archivists are not especially potent front-line fighters and will often hang back with the wizards when combat arises. They are sturdier and usually better armored than their arcane counterparts, however, and boldly stride into combat when necessary (for example, when it means defending one who is weaker or easier to hit).

Archivists are especially effective in parties that contain other divine casters or bards. Given preparation time, an archivist can use his magic to bolster party members, including the clerics, so that when combat begins, the clerics can wade into battle with the fighters, leaving the archivists free to heal.

If PCs are likely to face foes who have secret weaknesses, there can be an enormous benefit in recruiting an archivist. An archivist can often provide information about a foe's weaknesses that spells the difference between failure and success against that adversary.

Advancement

It is often said that archivists are born, not made. Many who embrace this class do so out of a genuine thirst for learning, often accompanied by a reverence or admiration for divine power. Some people who end up walking the path of the archivist began as apprentice wizards or junior clerics but soon felt the call to seek hidden knowledge.

Many archivists are archivists for life; the more hidden lore they uncover, the more they feel they still have to learn. Others multiclass to complement their abilities, sometimes validating their pursuits in the eyes of a church hierarchy by taking levels in cleric or even paladin. Less frequently, an archivist's hunger for lore causes him to branch out into the arcane arts, splitting his studies between divine exploration and wizardry. The archivist is also an exceptionally versatile class for the purposes of prerequisites, acting as a natural gateway class for many prestige classes.

DREAD NECROMANCER

"Necromancy is not just one school of magic among many. It is an Art, one that requires the Artist's entire devotion."

—Kazerabet, Angel of the Dark

A specialist wizard who calls himself a necromancer or a cleric with the Death domain has significant power over undead and the forces of negative energy, but a dread necromancer is their true master. A practitioner of vile and forbidden arts, the dread necromancer roots about in graveyards, searching out moldering components for his obscene spells. He calls upon restless, tormented spirits of the dead, seeking their arcane secrets. He might be a consummate villain, or perhaps a tortured hero whose obsession with death leads him along questionable moral paths.

MAKING A DREAD NECROMANCER

A dread necromancer is similar to other arcane spellcasters such as wizards, sorcerers, bards, or warmages. He does

not learn spells as quickly as wizards do, nor have access to such a great variety of spells, but he excels at his primary repertoire—necromantic, evil, and fear-related spells. He is a combat caster, with more resilience than a wizard or sorcerer and a definite emphasis on combat-oriented necromantic spells.

Abilities: Charisma determines how powerful a spell a dread necromancer can cast, how many spells he can cast per day, and how hard those spells are to resist. Like a sorcerer or wizard, a dread necromancer benefits from high Dexterity and Constitution scores.

Races: Of the standard races, humans are most likely to become dread necromancers. They seem by nature to be more preoccupied with death than longer-lived races, and hence more apt to drift into a necromantic career. Elf dread necromancers, while rare, are not unknown, and a few half-orcs inherit a morbid interest in death and gore from both sides of their lineage.

Among other races, dread necromancers are most common among the githyanki and the drow. The githyanki actually hold dread necromancers in high esteem, while drow society shuns them—more because they dare to worship deities other than Lolth than because of any real revulsion toward them and their practices.

Alignment: Not all dread necromancers are evil, although the best of them could easily be described as evil-tolerant. No dread necromancer can have a good alignment. Performing evil acts is a basic feature of the class, but some dread necromancers manage to balance evil acts with good intentions, remaining solidly neutral (most PC dread necromancers fall into this category).

CLASS FEATURES

Spellcasting is your greatest strength, although your rate of spell acquisition is closer to that of a sorcerer than a wizard. You make up for slower spellcasting progression with a wide array of special abilities, including a touch attack that uses negative energy to harm your foes. This attack increases in strength and gains additional effects as you gain levels. Because many of your abilities rely on your entering melee, you are proficient with light armor and have the ability to cast your spells while wearing light armor. You also gain a resilience to damage that wizards or sorcerers do not possess.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A dread necromancer is proficient with all simple weapons and with one martial weapon of his choice. His choice of martial weapon is made when the character takes his first level of dread necromancer and cannot be changed.

Dread necromancers are also proficient with light armor, but not with shields. The somatic components required for dread necromancer spells are simple, so members of this class can cast dread necromancer spells while wearing light armor without incurring the normal arcane spell failure chance. He still incurs the normal arcane spell failure chance for arcane spells derived from other classes. In addition, if a dread necromancer wears medium or heavy armor, or uses a shield, he incurs the same chance of arcane spell failure as any other arcane caster if the spell in question has a somatic component.

Spellcasting: A dread necromancer casts arcane spells, which are drawn from the dread necromancer's spell list (see page 87). Like a sorcerer, he can cast any spell he knows without preparing it ahead of time. When a dread necromancer gains access to a new level of spells, he automatically knows all the spells for that level given on the dread necromancer's spell list. Dread necromancers also have the option of adding to their existing spell list through their advanced learning ability as they increase in level (see below).

Table 5–2: The Dread Necromancer **Hit Die: d6**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Charnel touch, rebuke undead	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Lich body DR 2	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Negative energy burst 1/day	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Advanced learning, mental bastion +2	6	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Fear aura	6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Scabrous touch 1/day	6	5	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Lich body DR 4, summon familiar	6	6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Advanced learning, negative energy burst 2/day, undead mastery	6	6	5	3	—	—	—	—	—
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Negative energy resistance	6	6	6	4	—	—	—	—	—
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Light fortification 25%	6	6	6	5	3	—	—	—	—
11th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Lich body DR 6, scabrous touch 2/day	6	6	6	6	4	—	—	—	—
12th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Advanced learning, enervating touch	6	6	6	6	5	3	—	—	—
13th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Negative energy burst 3/day	6	6	6	6	6	4	—	—	—
14th	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9	Mental bastion +4	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	—	—
15th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	Lich body DR 8	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	—	—
16th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Advanced learning, scabrous touch 3/day	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	—
17th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Enervating touch, light fortification 50%	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	—
18th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Negative energy burst 4/day	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3
19th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Craft wondrous item	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4
20th	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Advanced learning, lich transformation	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Craft, Decipher Script, Disguise, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Profession, and Spellcraft.

To cast a spell, a dread necromancer must have a Charisma score of 10 + the spell's level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a dread necromancer's spell is 10 + the spell's level + his Charisma modifier. Like other spellcasters, a dread necromancer can cast only a certain number of spells of each spell level per day. His base daily spell allotment is given in Table 5–2: The Dread Necromancer. In addition, he receives bonus spells for a high Charisma score (see Table 1–1 on page 8 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Charnel Touch (Su): Negative energy flows through a dread necromancer's body, concentrating in his hands. At will, but no more than once per round, he can make a melee touch attack against a living foe that deals 1d8 points of damage, +1 per four class levels. This touch heals undead creatures, restoring 1 hit point per touch, +1 per four class levels.

A dread necromancer can use the *spectral hand* spell to deliver this attack from a distance.

Rebuke Undead (Su): A dread necromancer can rebuke or command undead creatures by channeling negative energy through his body. See the cleric class feature described on page 33 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Lich Body: Starting at 2nd level, a dread necromancer begins his journey into undeath. The first symptom is his body's increased resilience to physical harm. He gains DR 2/ bludgeoning and magic. As the dread necromancer increases in level, this DR increases in effectiveness, to DR 4 at 7th level, DR 6 at 11th level, and DR 8 at 15th level.

Negative Energy Burst (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, a dread necromancer gains the ability to emit a burst of negative energy from his body, harming living creatures within 5 feet of him. This burst deals 1d4 points of damage per class level. A successful Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 his class level + Cha modifier) reduces damage by half. Undead creatures within this burst are healed the same amount of hit points as the damage he deals to living creatures. A dread necromancer can use this ability once per day at 3rd level, and one additional time per day for every five levels he attains beyond 3rd (2/day at 8th level, 3/day at 13th level, and 4/ day at 18th level).

Advanced Learning (Ex): At 4th level, a dread necromancer can add a new spell to his list, representing the result of personal study and experimentation. The spell must be a cleric or wizard spell of the necromancy school, and of a level no higher than that of the highest-level spell the dread necromancer already knows. Once a new spell is selected, it is added to that dread necromancer's spell list and can be cast just like any other spell he knows. If a spell is both a cleric spell and a wizard spell, use the lower of the two spell levels (when different) to determine what level the spell is for a dread necromancer.

A dread necromancer gains an additional new spell at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th level.

Mental Bastion: Starting at 4th level, a dread necromancer gains a +2 bonus on saving throws made to resist *sleep*, stunning, paralysis, poison, or disease. This bonus increases to +4 at 14th level.

Fear Aura (Su): Beginning at 5th level, a dread necromancer radiates a 5-foot-radius fear aura as a free action. Enemies in the area must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 her class level + her Cha modifier) or become shaken. A creature who successfully saves cannot be affected by that dread necromancer's fear aura for 24 hours.

Scabrous Touch (Su): Starting at 6th level, once per day a dread necromancer can use his charnel touch to inflict disease on a creature he touches. This ability works like the *contagion* spell (see page 213 of the *Player's Handbook*), inflicting the disease of her choice immediately, with no incubation period, unless the target makes a successful Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 her class level + her Cha modifier). The DC for subsequent saving throws to resist the effects of the disease depends on the disease inflicted; see page 292 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details.

Activating this class feature is a swift action. The effect lasts until the dread necromancer makes a successful charnel touch attack. The *spectral hand* spell enables a dread necromancer to deliver a scabrous touch attack from a distance.

A dread necromancer can use this ability once per day at 6th level, twice per day at 11th level, and three times per day at 16th level.

Summon Familiar: At 7th level or anytime thereafter, a dread necromancer can obtain a familiar. The familiar he acquires is more powerful than a standard wizard's or sorcerer's familiar, but it is unequivocally evil. The player of a dread necromancer character chooses one of the following creatures: imp (devil), quasit (demon), vargouille, or ghostly visage. All these creatures are described in the *Monster Manual* except for the ghostly visage, an undead symbiont described on page 221 of the *Fiend Folio*.

A dread necromancer's familiar gains the usual familiar benefits given on pages 52–53 of the *Player's Handbook*, with two exceptions. Its type does not change, and it does not gain the exceptional ability to speak with other creatures of its kind.

Kazerabet, Angel of the Dark

Illus. by E. Polak

A dread necromancer's familiar can use its ability to deliver touch spells such as its master's charnel touch, scabrous touch, or enervating touch attack. The master must use a standard action to imbue the touch attack into his familiar.

Undead Mastery: All undead creatures created by a dread necromancer who has reached 8th level or higher gain a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength and Dexterity and 2 additional hit points per Hit Die.

In addition, when a dread necromancer uses the *animate dead* spell to create undead, he can control 4 + his Charisma bonus HD worth of undead creatures per class level (rather than the 4 HD per level normally granted by the spell).

Similarly, when a dread necromancer casts the *control undead* spell, the spell targets up to (2 + his Cha bonus) HD/level of undead creatures, rather than the 2 HD/level normally granted by the spell.

Negative Energy Resistance: Beginning at 9th level, a dread necromancer gains a +4 bonus on saving throws made to resist negative energy effects, including energy drain, some ability drain, and *inflict* spells.

Light Fortification: Starting at 10th level, a dread necromancer gains 25% resistance to critical hits; this is the equivalent of the light fortification armor special ability described on page 219 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. At 17th level, this fortification increases to 50%.

Enervating Touch (Su): When a dread necromancer reaches 12th level, he gains the ability to bestow negative levels when he uses his charnel touch attack. Each day, he can bestow a total number of negative levels equal to one-half his class level, but no more than two negative levels with a single touch. The saving throw to remove the negative levels has a DC of 10 + 1/2 his class level + his Charisma modifier.

Activating this class feature is a swift action. The effect lasts until he makes a successful charnel touch attack.

A dread necromancer can use the *spectral hand* spell to deliver this attack from a distance.

Beginning at 17th level, the number of negative levels a dread necromancer can bestow per day increases to equal his class level.

Craft Wondrous Item: At 19th level, the dread necromancer gains Craft Wondrous Item as a bonus feat. This helps his=m prepare the phylactery required to become a lich.

Lich Transformation: When a dread necromancer attains 20th level, he undergoes a hideous transformation and becomes a lich. His type changes to undead, and he gains all the traits of the undead (see page 317 of the *Monster Manual*). He no longer has a Constitution score, all his existing Hit Dice become d12s, and he must reroll his hit points. A dread necromancer need not pay experience points or gold to create his phylactery.

A dread necromancer who is not humanoid does not gain this class feature.

DREAD NECROMANCER SPELL LIST

The dread necromancer's spell list appears below.

1st Level: *Bane, bestow wound*, cause fear, chill touch, detect magic, detect undead, doom, hide from undead, inflict light wounds, ray of enfeeblement, summon undead I*, undetectable alignment*

2nd Level: *Blindness/deafness, command undead, darkness, death knell, false life, gentle repose, ghoul touch, inflict moderate wounds, scare, spectral hand, summon swarm, summon undead II**

3rd Level: *Crushing despair, death ward, halt undead, inflict serious wounds, ray of exhaustion, speak with dead, summon undead III*, vampiric touch*

4th Level: *Animate dead, bestow curse, contagion, death ward, dispel magic, enervation, Evard's black tentacles, fear, giant vermin, inflict critical wounds, phantasmal killer, poison, summon undead IV**

5th Level: *Blight, cloudkill, fire in the blood*, greater dispel magic, insect plague, lesser planar binding, magic jar, mass inflict light wounds, nightmare, oath of blood*, slay living, summon undead V*, undeath to death, unhallow, waves of fatigue*

6th Level: *Acid fog, circle of death, create undead, eyebite, geas/quest, harm, mass inflict moderate wounds, planar binding, waves of exhaustion*

7th Level: *Control undead, destruction, finger of death, greater harm*, mass inflict serious wounds, song of discord, vile death**

8th Level: *Create greater undead, horrid wilting, mass inflict critical wounds, symbol of death*

9th Level: *Energy drain, imprison soul*, mass harm*, plague of undead*, wail of the banshee*

*New spell (see Dread Magic, starting page 125).

PLAYING A DREAD NECROMANCER

You hold the power of death in the palm of your hand (quite literally, albeit on a small scale at the start of your career). If your career continues as planned, you will survive forever as a lich. This destiny naturally makes you superior to lesser mortals who are doomed to molder in their crypts or shuffle about mindlessly as your animated minions. You favor somber clothing, cultivate a pale and gaunt appearance, and speak in soft, low, sinister tones. You might harbor some vague notions about using your dark powers for the good of the world, but your most important motivation is your own power—and, ultimately, your transformation into an eternal undead creature. You approach every adventure with these goals at least in the back of your mind, if not at the forefront. What forgotten secrets might you unearth on this journey? What clues might you uncover to the location of ancient crypts and artifacts? What elements of this tomb design might you incorporate into your own eventual lair? Altruism rarely motivates you to undertake an adventure, but other motives might easily disguise themselves as concern for others.

Religion

The gods of good and light do not tolerate dread necromancers among their followers (even good-aligned death gods such as Osiris). Most dread necromancers worship Wee Jas, Vecna, or especially Nerull, while some worship even darker gods, whose names are mentioned only in whispers, or fiendish lords such as Orcus. Other dread necromancers are completely impious, seeking personal power in order to establish themselves as gods, rather than offering worship to any other deity, no matter how foul.

Other Classes

Dread necromancers have much in common with wizards, particularly specialist necromancers. They often join

associations of wizards or sorcerers, where such groups exist, in order to acquire more spells. Paladins and clerics of good deities dislike dread necromancers, nor do druids hold any fondness for them. Other character classes are able to work alongside dread necromancers, particularly if their own goals or methods are equally unsavory.

Combat

A dread necromancer's participation in combat is a balancing act. He wants to be able to deliver touch attacks, but light armor and his relatively weak (d6) Hit Dice offer only modest protection against enemy attacks. The *spectral hand* spell is an effective solution that allows his to remain apart from the thick of melee while using his charnel touch. His familiar can also deliver these attacks for him, although it is little less fragile than the dread necromancer himself.

Gaining the ability to cast *animate dead* is a bit like taking the Leadership feat and acquiring a squadron of followers. Skeletons and zombies can shield a dread necromancer from enemy attacks, open doors and spring traps while he remains at a safe distance, and wait on his hand and foot. Dread necromancers always look for opportunities to animate fallen foes of Large or larger size, since they make even more effective combatants.

As a dread necromancer reaches the higher levels of his class, his charnel touch becomes ever more fearsome and he eventually transforms into an undead creature himself. By this point he has probably acquired magic items that bring his Armor Class to a respectable level and thus might be more willing to wade into the thick of melee with his charnel touch. Of course, by the time he can cast *horrid wilting* there might be little need for him to enter melee at all.

Advancement

Dread necromancers often have some tragic experience in their early lives that marks the beginning of their fascination with death, undeath, and the power of necromancy. He might have been the sole survivor of a terrible massacre, hiding somewhere while he watched his family, friends, and neighbors cut down, or perhaps forced to hide in a pile of corpses in order to escape the soldiers who razed his village. Other dread necromancers experience some supernatural connection to a long-dead civilization or a single notable figure of the ancient past. He might have been haunted since childhood by strange dreams in which he muttered phrases in some forgotten language, waking with the compulsion to investigate dusty ruins in search of arcane lore.

Corrupt spells (see page 125) represent a store of spells not on a dread necromancer's normal spell list that he can nevertheless learn and cast. Feats that improve his spellcasting, particularly metamagic feats, are often the most useful, though Combat Casting and Mobility are particularly important for spellcasters who enter melee to deliver touch attacks.

Prestige Classes

The following six prestige classes are all well suited to horror campaigns. Some embrace taint and use it to fuel their power, while others oppose it with all their might.

CORRUPT AVENGER

"I don't care what it does to me, I only care what I can do to them."
—Shovan the Marked, a corrupt avenger

Born to the sword, the corrupt avenger has experienced firsthand the devastation that violence can cause. He survived, but someone close to him was not so lucky. As a result, he has sworn vengeance against whoever or whatever caused his loss, whether it's a specific individual or every representative of a specific kind of monster. He accepts any cost to have his vengeance, even to the forfeit of his very soul. What does not kill him makes him stronger.

BECOMING A CORRUPT AVENGER

There are few requirements to becoming a corrupt avenger. The class presumes a martial background, but even a high-level wizard or sorcerer can qualify. The most significant requirement is a considerable degree of corruption—enough that the character has already experienced the downward slide of moral and physical decay. By swearing an oath of vengeance and pursuing the course of the corrupt avenger, the character can begin turning this flaw to his advantage.

Table 5–3: The Corrupt Avenger **Hit Die: d12**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Armored casting, detect sworn foe, sworn foe +2, taint suppression	0	—	—	—
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Tainted strike 1/day	1	—	—	—
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Grim resolve	1	0	—	—
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Sworn foe +4	1	1	—	—
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Frightful fury	1	1	0	—
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Tainted strike 2/day	1	1	1	—
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Sworn foe +6	2	1	1	0
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	—	2	1	1	1
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Unnerving fury	2	2	1	1
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Sworn foe +8, tainted strike 3/day	2	2	2	1

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (local), Listen, Ride, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival.

Entry Requirements
Alignment: Non-evil
Base attack bonus: +6
Taint: Moderate corruption

CLASS FEATURES

Your thirst for vengeance drives you. Combined with your willing embrace of the taint you acquire in pursuit of your goal, it also powers your abilities, from the fury that fills you when you battle your foes to the spells you cast.

Spellcasting: You have the ability to cast a small number of arcane spells. To cast a corrupt avenger spell, you must have a corruption score equal to or greater than the spell's level. Bonus spells are based on a number equal to 10 + your corruption score, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + your Charisma modifier. When you get 0 spells per day of a given level, you gain only any bonus spells you would be entitled to based on your corruption score. You prepare and cast spells just as a wizard does; your spell list appears below. You can also prepare and cast corrupt spells (see page 125).

You record your corrupt avenger spells in a spellbook, just as a wizard does. At 1st level, your spellbook contains two 1st-level spells of your choice, selected from the corrupt avenger spell list on page 90. At each new corrupt avenger level, you gain two new spells of any spell level or levels that you can cast (based on your new corrupt avenger level) for your spellbook. At any time, you can also add spells found in other corrupt avengers' spellbooks to your own, and you can also add spells from another character's spellbook (such as a wizard's or a wu jen's book) to your own as long as those spells appear on your class spell list.

Armored Casting: Because the somatic components required for corrupt avenger spells are simple, you can cast corrupt avenger spells while wearing light armor without incurring the normal arcane spell failure chance. However, wearing medium or heavy armor, or using a shield, imposes the normal chance of spell failure if the spell in question has a somatic component (most do). Wearing even light armor still imposes the normal arcane spell failure chance for arcane spells derived from other classes.

Detect Sworn Foe (Sp): You have the spell-like ability to detect the presence of your sworn foe. This ability is similar to the *detect evil* spell (see page 218 of the *Player's Handbook*) in range, area, and duration. In the first round of concentration, you can ascertain the presence of a sworn foe within the area. In the second round, you can determine the number of foes in the area and the power of the strongest one (as per the *detect evil* spell). In the third round, you can determine the strength and location of each foe.

Sworn Foe (Ex): At 1st level, you must choose a specific kind of monster or an organization as your sworn foe. This cannot be a broad category such as aberrations but must be a single creature type, like bugbears. You gain a +2 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks relating to your sworn foe. This bonus increases to +4 at 4th level, to +6 at 7th level, and to +8 at 10th level. Unlike a ranger's attack against a favored enemy, you do not gain a bonus on damage rolls against your sworn foe.

Instead, whenever you face your sworn foe in combat, you enter a ragelike fury. You gain a +2 bonus to your Strength and Constitution scores. This fury lasts for a number of rounds equal to your corruption score, or until none of your sworn foes remain within sight (or within 60 feet if they are invisible or otherwise hidden from your sight). At the conclusion of your fury, you must make a Fortitude save with a DC equal to 15 + 1 per round that you were in your frenzy. If you fail this save, your corruption score increases by 1.

Taint Suppression: While you are likely to accumulate high corruption and depravity scores over the course of your career, this taint is not immediately obvious to onlookers. Your depravity manifests in the normal range of mental symptoms, but you can replace any physical symptom of corruption with the internal corruption symptom. If you enter a tainted area, your corruption immediately manifests externally, and you regain the physical symptoms you exchanged for internal corruption. These physical symptoms disappear 1d4 days after you leave a tainted area. It is otherwise impossible to tell, based on your external appearance, that you carry corruption.

Tainted Strike (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, you can infuse a melee attack with the power of your taint, adding 1/2 your class level to the damage you deal with the attack. If you strike a creature immune to the effects of taint (such as an undead creature or a creature with the evil subtype), the tainted strike has no effect.

You can use this ability once per day at 2nd level, twice per day at 6th level, and three times per day at 10th level.

Grim Resolve (Ex): Starting at 3rd level, you gain a bonus equal to your Charisma bonus (if any) on all saving throws. This benefit does not stack with other effects that allow you to add your Charisma bonus to saves (such as divine grace).

Frightful Fury (Ex): Beginning at 5th level, when you face your sworn foe and enter your fury, all opponents within 30 feet of you must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + your corrupt avenger level + your Cha modifier) or become shaken, taking a –2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

Unnerving Fury (Ex): When you reach 9th level, your fury becomes even more fearsome. Opponents within 30 feet of you who fail a Will save (DC 10 + your corrupt avenger level + your Cha modifier) become unnerved, taking a –4 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

FALLEN PALADINS

All too often in a horror campaign, paladins become so obsessed with their crusade against a particular evil foe that they lose their good alignment. Perhaps fortunately for them, they can retain some of their powers or replace them with similar abilities by becoming corrupt avengers. A fallen paladin who becomes a corrupt avenger gains all the following abilities that apply, according to the number of paladin levels the character has.

1–2: Tainted strike 1/day. (This use is in addition to, and stacks with, the ability granted to all corrupt avengers at 2nd level.)

3–4: Lay on hands. Once per day, you can use this supernatural ability to cure yourself of damage equal to one-half

your corruption score + your combined corrupt avenger and paladin levels.

5–6: You gain an additional bonus use of tainted strike. In addition, your sworn foe bonus increases by +2. These bonuses stack with bonuses bestowed by corrupt avenger class levels.

7–8: Bonus tainted feat. Choose any tainted feat from the Feats section starting on page 119. You must meet the prerequisites for this feat.

9–10: Death knell. Whenever you use a coup de grace to kill a living creature, you gain the benefit of the *death knell* spell (see page 217 of the *Player's Handbook*). In addition, you gain an additional bonus use of tainted strike per day.

CORRUPT AVENGER SPELL LIST

The corrupt avenger's spell list appears below.

1st Level: *Cause fear, detect magic, detect poison, detect taint*, detect undead, doom, endure elements, magic weapon, read magic, resistance*

2nd Level: *Bear's endurance, bull's strength, darkness, death knell, false life, resist energy, scare, shatter, summon swarm, undetectable alignment, vampiric touch*

3rd Level: *Bestow curse, deeper darkness, discern lies, dispel magic, fear, greater magic weapon, haste, protection from energy, remove curse, slow, speak with dead*

4th Level: *Cloak of hate*, crushing despair, death ward, enervation, Evard's black tentacles, freedom of movement, phantasmal killer, pronouncement of fate**

*New spell (see Dread Magic, starting page 125)

Illus. by E. Polak

Shovan the Marked, Corrupt Avenger

PLAYING A CORRUPT AVENGER

A single-minded dedication to exterminating your sworn foe defines your actions and reactions, consumes your thoughts, and haunts your restless sleep. Most corrupt avengers are grim and dour, but a few manage to keep up a facade of joviality, laughing and drinking in apparent merriment as their calculating eyes remain ever watchful for signs of their enemies.

Combat

Particularly when facing your sworn foe, in melee is where you want to be, fighting in a state of fury and making tainted strikes. Your superior (d12) Hit Dice, as well as the Constitution bonus you gain in your fury, help to make up for the relatively low AC you have when limiting yourself to light armor.

Against opponents other than your sworn foes, or when the situation calls for some discretion, you prefer to hang back and soften up your enemies with spells, at least at first. Fear-related spells (*cause fear, doom, scare,* and so on) can help disperse large groups of opponents, while personal improvement spells (*bull's strength, bear's endurance, false life, haste,* and others) can be worth the investment in time to improve your performance when you enter melee.

By the time you reach the highest levels of the class, your spells can sometimes kill opponents safely from a distance (*phantasmal killer*), you can perform multiple tainted strikes, and you can seriously hinder your sworn foes merely by entering melee, thanks to your unnerving fury.

Advancement

Becoming a corrupt avenger is a fairly straightforward process, with few requirements that involve any decisions on your part. If you have a high enough base attack bonus, the key requirement is simply allowing your corruption to build up to the moderate level without taking steps to remove it. Think of this process as letting the anger and grief you feel fester within you, taking a physical toll on your body as it drives you to acts of greater and greater desperation.

As you advance in levels, your grief and rage continue to burn, but you have found a way to channel them into the external world, so that your corruption no longer warps and deforms your body. Instead, it smites your enemies, manifests itself in debilitating magic, and strikes terror into the hearts of those around you.

Choosing your sworn foe should ideally be a story-driven concern, based on events in your past—either your previous adventures or your background before you began play. That said, it's important to choose a sworn foe that you are likely to continue fighting over the course of ten levels in this class and beyond. Don't be afraid to discuss this point with your DM beforehand. Choosing black puddings might make a great deal of sense from a character perspective, but unless your DM is running a very unusual campaign, black puddings are unlikely to be a worthwhile sworn foe over the long term of your character's development. Monsters that commonly advance by character class are often a good choice, because they are more likely to make appearances over a long period of time and remain important challenges over the entirety of your career.

Resources

You provide for yourself. You don't need help from anyone, and wouldn't accept it if they offered it—which they won't. You always seem to find what you need, or take it if you have

to. Other corrupt avengers don't feel any responsibility to you, nor you to them. You're on your own.

CORRUPT AVENGERS IN THE WORLD

"Shovan has gone too far—his desire to destroy evil has made him become a thing of evil himself."

—Alhandra

There's a fine line between an antihero and a true villain, especially when the antihero shares the heroes' goals up to a point but employs methods that shock them. A corrupt avenger's unceasing thirst for vengeance can make him an interesting opponent, one able to arouse the sympathy of the player characters while nonetheless becoming their foe. This kind of sympathetic villain is a staple of the horror genre and can add depth to a horror campaign.

Organization

There is no organization of corrupt avengers, and members of the class tend to operate as loners. They show no particular regard for one another, unless two corrupt avengers who share the same sworn foe meet and find their purposes compatible (a rare event).

Corrupt avengers are single-minded in pursuit of vengeance against their sworn foes, and this quest for vengeance dictates their lifestyle and day-to-day activities. An avenger who has sworn vengeance against an evil baron and his agents might not travel much, except to stay on the run from the baron's soldiers, lurking in villages or woodland hideouts within the baron's lands. On the other hand, an avenger who has sworn vengeance against the githyanki might travel the length and breadth of the infinite planes in a never-ending quest to rid every plane of the vile githyanki.

The corrupt avengers most commonly mentioned in folklore serve as cautionary tales about allowing the thirst for vengeance to become all consuming. For example, Talib al-Ysawis took up the path of the corrupt avenger after his sisters were destroyed by a lich. His quest to destroy all liches led him at last to seek undeath himself, in order to continue his crusade beyond his mortal body's demise.

NPC Reactions

Few people can identify a corrupt avenger from a casual glance or even careful visual examination. Those who spend time interacting with one seldom leave the conversation with any great liking for this grim, vengeance-obsessed stranger. When encountering a corrupt avenger, most NPCs start with an indifferent attitude that shifts to unfriendly once they have engaged the character in conversation and experienced his obsessive nature at first hand.

Characters who cling to high ideals of righteousness and seek to purge the taint of corruption wherever they find it are natural opponents of corrupt avengers. They might have no quarrel with a particular avenger's aims but cannot abide the methods he uses and the price he is willing to pay. Such characters always include paladins, purifiers of the Hallowed Doctrine (a prestige class described later in this chapter), and often other heroic characters as well. From the corrupt avenger's viewpoint, these people are relevant only if they hinder him in his mission of revenge—otherwise, their animosity is meaningless.

CORRUPT AVENGER LORE

Characters with Knowledge (arcana) can research corrupt avengers to learn more about them.

DC 10: Some people are so driven by a thirst for vengeance that they embrace evil magic to attain it.

DC 15: A corrupt avenger is someone who has sworn an oath of vengeance and gains powers from it—powers that seem to come from an evil force that festers inside him.

DC 20: Corrupt avengers embrace the taint of evil and use it to power their spells and become more dangerous in combat, particularly against their sworn foes.

Characters with Knowledge (local) or bardic lore can use those abilities to learn about a specific corrupt avenger or one who has sworn vengeance against a local organization or monster.

CORRUPT AVENGERS IN THE GAME

Corrupt avengers, being loners with no elaborate supporting organization, can be dropped into an ongoing campaign with little explanation. If taint has not previously been a part of your campaign, a corrupt avenger might serve to introduce it. Perhaps some kind of demonic incursion wiped out a remote village—leaving one survivor, who became a corrupt avenger. When the PCs stumble upon the site of the razed village, now festering with taint, the survivor might be the first tainted character the PCs meet. His appearance could familiarize the characters with the mechanics of taint and introduce a horror-based story arc into an ongoing campaign.

If a player character adopts the corrupt avenger class, it is important to help him choose a sworn enemy that will remain an interesting opponent throughout the rest of the campaign (or at least the rest of that character's life). Once you have helped the player choose an appropriate sworn foe, make sure you include suitable opponents at least once every adventure, to keep the player feeling like he made a worthwhile choice. Naturally, an NPC corrupt avenger can have a more narrowly focused sworn foe than would be viable for a PC avenger. In fact, his sworn foe could be the player characters themselves!

Adaptation

One great opportunity for customizing the corrupt avenger to your campaign is to think about the oath of vengeance a character must swear to enter the class. If there is a god of vengeance in your campaign (such as Hoar in the Forgotten Realms, Re-Horakhty in the Pharaonic pantheon presented in *Deities and Demigods*, or even St. Cuthbert from the core deities), you might require that this oath be sworn in that deity's temple with a cleric of that deity as witness, and the class might gain a certain divine sanction. If you prefer not to use the taint mechanics in your campaign, you could change the avenger's abilities so that they are powered by the sanction of this divine patron of retribution.

Sample Encounters

Corrupt avengers are usually encountered alone. An NPC avenger might be encountered while hunting the PCs,

someone they care about, or a villain or monster that the PCs are also hunting. The corrupt avenger's grim emphasis on mortal retribution can make an interesting twist to an encounter that the PCs would like to talk their way through—perhaps the avenger has just killed someone from whom the PCs sought information.

EL 8: Shovan the Marked was the sole survivor of a rare drow attack on the surface world. Badly burned in the attack, he wears the scars of that battle proudly, tracing the lines of the scars with his fingers as he contemplates the punishment he will inflict on the next drow he encounters. He spends most of his time underground, exploring the natural caves near the ruins of his home city for any sign of drow.

Shovan the Marked — CR 8

Male halfling ranger 6/corrupt avenger 2
CN Small humanoid
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +10, Spot +10
Languages Common, Halfling

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15
hp 56 (8 HD)
Immune fear
Fort +11, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4
Weakness caster level check (DC 20) required to cast spells with verbal component

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Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +14/+9 (1d6+2/×3) or
Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +10 (2d6+4/×3) with Manyshot or
Ranged +1 *composite longbow* +12/+12/+7 (1d6+2/×3) with Rapid Shot or
Melee greatsword +10/+5 (1d10+1/19–20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +5
Atk Options favored enemy (elves +4, aberrations +2), sworn foe (drow) +2, tainted strike 1/day (+1 damage), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Surge of Malevolence (+6 on attack roll, save, or check)
Combat Gear *potion of shield of faith* (+2), 2 *potions of cure light wounds*
Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):
1st—*longstrider, resist energy* (DC 12)
Corrupt Avenger Spells Prepared (CL 2nd):
1st—*detect magic, detect taint*, doom* (DC 10)
* New spell described on page 128

Abilities Str 12, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
Corruption 10 (moderate), **Depravity** 2 (mild)
SQ corruption symptoms (lips shrink, gums swell), depravity symptom (aggressive), taint suppression (not used), armored casting, detect sworn foe
Feats Blind-Fight, Endurance, Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Surge of Malevolence*, Track
* New feat described on page 124
Skills Climb +3, Concentration +11, Hide +22, Intimidate –1, Jump –3, Listen +10, Move Silently +15, Spot +10, Survival +12
Possessions combat gear plus +2 *studded leather, +1 composite longbow* (+1 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *cloak of elvenkind,* greatsword
Spellbook prepared spells plus 1st—*cause fear, endure elements*

Sworn Foe against drow, Shovan gains a total +6 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks. Whenever he faces them in combat, he adds +2 to his Strength and Constitution scores for 10 rounds. At the end of his fury, his corruption score increases by 1 if he fails his Fortitude save (see page 89).

EL 15: Kejir deGannevar was once a noble and virtuous paladin, renowned for his courageous victories against overwhelming odds. His luck turned on one fateful venture onto the Astral Plane, when his adventuring companions (including his wife) were all slain by a githyanki raiding party. Kejir has now sworn vengeance against all githyanki and hopes one day to overthrow their great lich-queen. He travels the world and ventures across the planes in hopes of exterminating the "githyanki plague," as he calls it, from every place where it has spread.

Kejir deGannevar — CR 15

Male human ex-paladin 6/corrupt avenger 9
LN Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Common

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 126 (15 HD)
Immune fear
Fort +12, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9
Weakness must reroll concealment, miss if either roll misses; dazed for first round of combat if surprised; frightened by dragons (Will save, DC 14 + dragon's CR, to resist)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee +2 *extraplanar humanoid bane greatsword* +22/+17/+12 (2d6+8/17–20) or
Ranged +2 *composite longbow* +16/+11/+6 (1d8+6/×3)
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +19
Atk Options sworn foe (githyanki) +8, unnerving fury, tainted strike 4/day (+4 damage), Cleave, Great Cleave, Debilitating Strike (melee attack deal 2 points of Con damage, 4/day), Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Surge of Malevolence (+9 on attack roll, save, or check, 1/day), Tainted Fury (+30 hp, gain 1 tainted smite [+15 damage], 30 rd., 1/day)
Special Actions lay on hands 30 hp, 1/day
Combat Gear *arrow of extraplanar humanoid slaying, potion of cure moderate wounds*
Corrupt Avenger Spells Prepared (CL 9th):
4th—*crushing despair* (DC 15), *enervation* (+14 ranged touch), *freedom of movement, pronouncement of fate** (DC 15)
3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 14), *discern lies* (DC 14), *dispel magic, haste, protection from energy*
2nd—*bear's endurance, bull's strength, death knell* (DC 13), *resist energy, undetectable alignment, vampiric touch* (+19 melee touch)
1st—*cause fear* (DC 16), *detect magic, detect taint*, detect undead, doom* (DC 16), *resistance*
* New spells described later in this chapter
Abilities Str 18, Dex 9, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12
Corruption 30 (severe), **Depravity** 17 (moderate)
SQ corruption symptoms (internal corruption, chronic illness, dead eye), depravity symptoms (moderate phobia [dragons], disoriented), taint suppression
Feats Cleave, Debilitating Strike*, Great Cleave, Improved Critical, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Surge of Malevolence*, Tainted Fury*, Weapon Focus (greatsword)
* New feats described later in this chapter

Skills Concentration +20, Diplomacy +21, Ride +3, Sense Motive +16

Possessions combat gear plus *+2 mithral breastplate, +2 extraplanar humanoid bane greatsword, belt of giant strength +4, ring of protection +1, +2 composite longbow* (+4 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of resistance +1*

Spellbook prepared spells plus 4th—*death ward, phantasmal killer;* 3rd—*slow, speak with dead;* 2nd—*false life;* 1st—*read magic*

Sworn Foe against githyanki, Kejir gains a +8 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks. He can detect sworn foes within 60 feet at will. Whenever he faces githyanki in combat, he adds +2 to his Strength and Constitution scores for 30 rounds. At the end of his fury, his corruption score increases by 1 if he fails his Fortitude save. While he is in this fury, opponents within 30 ft. must succeed on a DC 20 Will save or become unnerved (–4 penalty to attacks, saves, and checks).

DEATH DELVER

"Many have gazed into the abyss, but how many have the strength to meet its stare when it gazes back at them?"

—Fortenus, Death Delver

The mystery of death and dying is one that occupies the attention of almost every race, regardless of that race's behaviors or beliefs. The death delver is that rare individual who, rather than fearing and avoiding death, delves as deeply into its mysteries as he can, to better understand and eventually gain some small power over it. Unlike necromancers and other classes associated with death magic, the focus of a death delver's studies—or, more accurately, his journey—is much more deeply personal. Rather than concentrating on using death and death magic to affect the outside world, a death delver seeks to attune himself to the ebb and flow of death itself, and thereby draw strength from his understanding and indomitable courage in the face of it.

BECOMING A DEATH DELVER

Unlike many prestige classes, the death delver is open and appealing to characters of any prior class; the only common thread is that the individual possess a reflective disposition and a keen interest in death. The death delver's meditative nature perhaps makes it most appealing to priests, monks, and other philosophically minded individuals, but any character with a genuine passion for the exploration of death and dying is a good candidate for the class. Wisdom (for spells), Constitution (for facing death without fear), and Charisma (for several class features) are key abilities for death delvers.

Entry Requirements

Saving Throws: Base Will Save +2
Skills: Concentration 8 ranks, Heal 2 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 4 ranks
Special: Must have had at least one near-death experience (fallen below 0 hit points and lived)

CLASS FEATURES

As they advance in level, death delvers gain abilities that aid in understanding or mastering fear and death. They also gain a limited spellcasting ability, which focuses on similar themes.

Spellcasting: As a death delver, you have the ability to cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, you must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level. Death delver bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against your spells have a DC of 10 + spell's level + your Wisdom modifier. When you get 0 spells per day of a given level, you gain only the bonus spells you would be entitled to based upon your Wisdom score. The death delver spell list appears on page 94. You have access to any spell on the list and can freely choose which to prepare. You prepare and cast spells just like a cleric does.

Death delvers must spend 1 hour each night in the contemplation of death to regain their daily allotments of spells. Time spent resting has no impact on whether death delvers can prepare spells.

Deathsense (Ex): You have the infallible ability to detect the presence and condition of nearby life. This ability functions as the spell *deathwatch* (see page 217 of the *Player's Handbook*) but can be invoked at will, with no cost, as a swift action.

Rebuke Undead: Like an evil cleric, you can rebuke undead. Use your death delver level as the cleric level for determining success and damage. You can do this a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier and can

Table 5–4: The Death Delver Hit Die: d8

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	—Spellcasting— 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Deathsense, rebuke undead	0	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Deadened soul, spontaneous casting	1	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Death ward 1/day	1	0	—	—
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Diehard	1	1	—	—
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Fear aura	1	1	0	—
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Death ward 2/day	1	1	1	—
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Cheat death	2	1	1	0
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Mantle of life	2	1	1	1
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Death ward 3/day	2	2	1	1
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Nine lives	2	2	2	1

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Concentration, Craft, Gather Information, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Listen, Profession, Search, Spellcraft, and Spot.

take the Extra Turning feat to gain additional turn attempts. If you already have the ability to rebuke undead from a previous class, death delver levels stack with those class levels for the purposes of rebuking undead.

Deadened Soul (Ex): Upon reaching 2nd level, your understanding of death has progressed to the point where you no longer fear it, nor anything else. You are immune to fear effects of any kind.

Spontaneous Casting: By 2nd level, your familiarity with the ebb and flow of death has blossomed to the point that, like a cleric, you can lose any prepared spell in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower. An evil death delver can only spontaneously convert prepared spells into *inflict* spells of equal level or lower. Neutral death delvers must choose whether they will cast spontaneous *cure* or *inflict* spells and can never change their selection once the choice has been made.

Death Ward (Su): At 3rd level, you gain the ability to mystically protect yourself or another from the depredations of death magic and life-draining attacks. This supernatural ability functions exactly like the spell *death ward* (see page 217 of the *Player's Handbook*), save that the duration is 1 hour per death delver level. Using this ability is a standard action.

You gain an additional use of this ability per day upon reaching 6th level, and again at 9th level.

Diehard: Death delvers of at least 4th level gain the benefit of the Diehard feat (see page 93 of the *Player's Handbook*), even if they do not meet the prerequisites.

Fear Aura (Su): Starting at 5th level, once per day you can emanate a nearly palpable aura of fear in a 30-foot radius. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your class level. Enemies (not allies) within the area must make a Will save (DC 10 + class level + your Cha modifier) or be affected as if by a *fear* spell (see page 229 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Cheat Death (Ex): Upon reaching 7th level, your mastery over death and dying has progressed to the point where you can deny a foe the ability to send you into death's embrace in a single, cowardly blow. Whenever anyone attempts a coup de grace on you, you automatically make the subsequent Fortitude save (see pages 153–154 of the *Player's Handbook*). The attacker still deals just as much damage as he normally would, and you could still die from that damage. Similarly, when you take massive damage (50 or more points of damage from a single attack), you automatically succeed on the Fortitude save to survive the associated trauma (see page 145 of the *Player's Handbook*), although you can be killed by sheer damage dealt.

Mantle of Life (Su): Beginning at 8th level, you gain the ability to project your own wisdom and confidence into your allies. As a full-round action, you can send a surge of vitality through all companions within 60 feet. This surge grants every ally in the area (including yourself) a +4 bonus on Will saves for 1 minute per class level.

Nine Lives (Ex): The pinnacle of achievement for a death delver is the remarkable ability to step back through death's door when forcibly pushed through it. Upon reaching 10th level, you gain the ability to cheat death nine times—in effect, gaining nine bonus lives. Every time a single attack, spell, or effect would drop you below –10 hit points or otherwise kill you, you lose one of your nine lives in lieu of taking the effects of whatever would have killed you; instead you drop to –9 hit points but are stable. Continuing sources of damage, such as being dropped into lava or held under water, will of course burn through a character's nine lives in no time. Keep track of how many lives you've used, because once they're gone, they're gone.

For example, consider a death delver with seven lives and 11 hit points remaining who is struck by a critical hit that deals 32 points of damage. Since dropping to –21 hit points would kill him, he automatically loses one of his remaining bonus lives instead and stabilizes at –9 hit points, leaving him with six lives remaining. Later in the adventure, after he has been fully healed, a dread witch hits him with a *disintegrate* spell, which would normally reduce him to a pile of dust. He is once again reduced to –9 hit points and marks off another life (leaving five bonus lives remaining). He's not having a very good week, but at least he's still around to complain about it.

DEATH DELVER SPELL LIST

Death delvers choose their spells from the following list.

1st Level: *bless, cause fear, detect poison, detect undead, hide from undead, lesser restoration, remove fear*

2nd Level: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, command undead, delay poison, remove paralysis, resist energy, rigor mortis**

3rd Level: *animate dead, deep slumber, halt undead, protection from energy, remove blindness/deafness, remove disease, speak with dead*

4th Level: *break enchantment, death ward, enervation, fear, freedom of movement, neutralize poison, restoration*

*New spell described on page 132.

PLAYING A DEATH DELVER

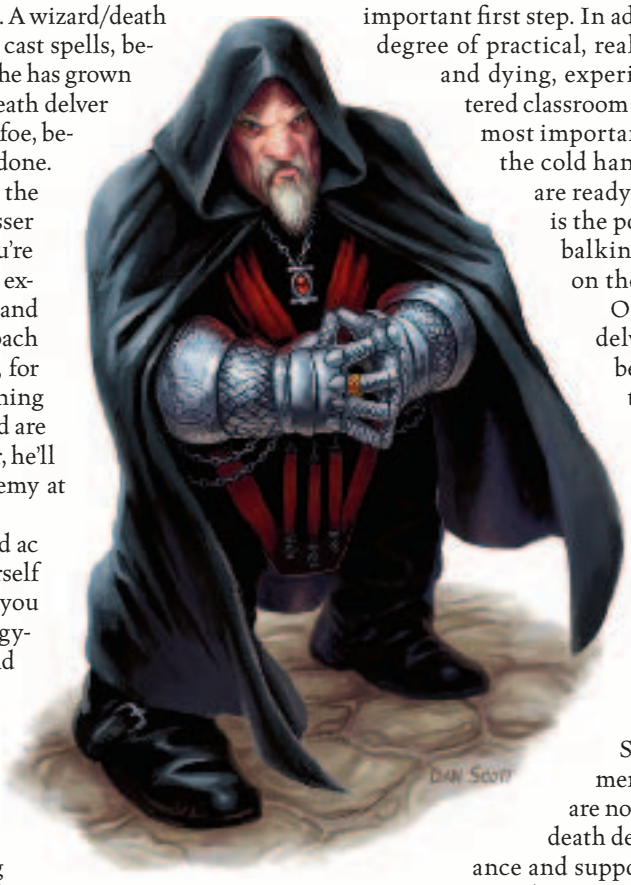
As a death delver, your primary focus is the furtherance of your understanding of death and dying. While some death delvers are dour and humorless, others understand enough of death to feel they must exult in life, making them agreeable companions. Your attitude, whether grim or gregarious, stems from a place of wisdom. Even if you are deeply religious (and quite a few death delvers are), your understanding and experience aren't tied to your deity; they come from years of hard-won personal achievement. The voyage of the death delver is a personal one; while you might be willing to bring other wisdom-seekers into the fold, each death delver is responsible for finding his own path.

Most death delvers are loners by inclination but can work well in parties that give them opportunities to further their ongoing experience. Many belong to an organization called the Society of the Sacred Shroud. The Sacred Shroud is a fellowship of like-minded death delvers, dedicated to pooling the knowledge of its members and aiding one another in times of need. Not every death delver is a member, but almost all have at least heard of the group. Rumors abound concerning a shadowy arm of the society composed solely of evil death delvers, but such an offshoot would run counter to the mission of the death delvers as a whole, and most death delvers disavow its existence (at least in public).

Combat

You make a truly frightful opponent in melee, since you have no fear of death. You don't rampage like a barbarian but instead display a disturbingly icy demeanor for someone who's wading into mortal combat. Much of what you do in combat depends on what class you belonged to before adopting the prestige class. A wizard/death delver tends to hang back and cast spells, because that's the style of combat he has grown to trust. Likewise, a paladin/death delver still valiantly charges in to the foe, because that's what she's always done. The difference comes in how the battle progresses and, to a lesser extent, your specific foe. If you're fighting undead, you'll have an extra set of tools at your disposal, and that will affect how you approach combat. A rogue/death delver, for example, won't bother positioning for a sneak attack, since undead are immune to critical hits. Rather, he'll probably try rebuking the enemy at the start of combat.

Once you get to 3rd level and acquire the ability to protect yourself or another with a *death ward*, you no longer need fear the energy-draining attacks of undead and can therefore close with them more safely than other party members. By this level, you are already capable of converting prepared spells into healing spells, so you can supplement the PCs' healing potential. If you are the party cleric, make sure your healing keeps every one of your allies on his feet over the course of combat.



Belig, Shroud ferryman

Starting at 5th level, you have the ability to generate a powerful fear effect in all enemies within 30 feet. Unless you specifically want to avoid sending away your opponents, scattering your enemies is a good way to start a combat. By 7th or 8th level, you have access to more potent magic and can start using spells such as *deep slumber* and *enervation* against your party's foes.

Advancement

The death delver is largely an intuitive class, which is to say that most characters come to it without the aid of others. Perhaps you learned of the death delvers and sought out one to whom you could apprentice yourself. Or perhaps agents of the Sacred Shroud heard of an especially promising candidate and sought you out with an invitation to join their society. However you came to the way of the shroud, by the time you take your first level in the prestige class you have become far more than just an eager mind: You are an explorer of an undiscovered country.

Only truly dedicated seekers ever find their way onto the path of the death delver. Before you were even eligible to begin studying its ways, you gained a familiarity with life and death that few achieve (or want) over the course of their entire lives. It takes tremendous willpower to face death and not turn away when its true face begins to emerge from the darkness, and only those with enough depth and strength of character find it within themselves to take that important first step. In addition, you must have a certain degree of practical, real-world experience with death and dying, experience rarely learned in a cloistered classroom or monastery. Last, and perhaps most important, you must have experienced the cold hand of death yourself before you are ready to become a death delver. This is the point where many fail to qualify, balking when their own mortality is on the line.

Once you have become a death delver, your studies have only just begun. As you gain more levels in the death delver prestige class, you'll want to keep raising your Knowledge skill ranks—not only is the acquisition of wisdom and understanding an essential part of the class's core concept, but understanding a foe is the key to defeating it.

Resources

Perhaps the best resource the Sacred Shroud provides to its members is the knowledge that you are not alone. You walk the path of the death delver at your own pace, but guidance and support can strengthen your will to proceed. Your vocation can be a grim and even mind-addling pursuit, and a community of like-minded fellows can be a vital support network in times of doubt or need. Beyond that, you are pledged to provide what aid you can to other death delvers, so long as it does not take you from your own path, so that they can learn and grow in the knowledge of death. You must always give healing to a fellow death delver, unless he refuses to accept aid or was hurt in attacking another death delver.

Although each death delver studies death in his own way, two items are common to every member of the class. The first is the book in which you record your observations, insights, questions, and conclusions. A death delver's journal is called a testament, and all such testaments are written in first person declarative. Another item carried by almost every death delver is a simple hourglass, which you use to time the meditations that replenish your daily spells. The hourglass is the symbol of the Sacred Shroud.

DEATH DELVERS IN THE WORLD

"Power is both our legacy and destiny, our past and our future. This is the promise of the Testament of Volculos."

—Zousha of Telos, journeyman of the Sacred Shroud

Illus. by D. Scott

Even if your game doesn't revolve around horror or the macabre, death delvers make a great addition to any game world. Every campaign setting has death (usually in spades), and wherever there is death there can be death delvers. Due to their policy of dynamic exploration, death delvers travel everywhere in order to gain a ringside seat for the events they wish to study. Got a major land war brewing between rival city-states? Death delvers will certainly be drawn to the area to study the impending carnage. Need a hired killer who doesn't fit the standard mold? Consider an evil death delver or, more sinister and deadly yet, a death delver/assassin. If the PCs get involved with plots that are even tangentially related to the interests of the Sacred Shroud, they are sure to cross paths with a death delver eventually.

Organization

When a death delver isn't out exploring with an adventuring party, he is almost always either meditating on the lessons learned from his last mission or out on his current mission for the Sacred Shroud. When the society does send its own on assignments, it sends them solo, in a pair, or in a trio. The organization lacks the numbers or inclination to send more than three of its members out together for the same purpose, and even a group of three death delvers represents a hefty deployment of resources, reserved for only the most important tasks.

While the society maintains various bases of operation throughout the land, each has more in common with a lodge or temple's guest hall than a permanent dwelling. By founding charter, the Sacred Shroud is a nondenominational organization, and members keep whatever faith they might have separate from their work and their dealings with fellow society members. Although chapter houses differ slightly in methodology and appearance from one region to another, each one is headed by a ferryman (see below), who is responsible for coordinating member efforts in his region. Below the ferryman is a loose hierarchy based primarily on experience, although some of the elder, more learned death delvers prefer to stay out in the field and leave administrative work to their younger and more community-minded fellows.

Active membership in the Sacred Shroud begins with a period of apprenticeship known as the caul. Members of this rank wear a translucent shroud when meeting senior death delvers. Once a death delver reaches 3rd level, his caul is ceremonially removed by the ranking death delver of the Shroud in his region and replaced by the deep purple shroud that signifies Shroud members the world over. At this point, the death delver holds the rank of journeyman in the society. Upon passing 6th level in the class, he returns his purple shroud to the death delver who presided over the ceremony in which he acquired it (if possible) and receives in exchange a black shroud with delicate silver cross-stitching. Death delvers of this level are known as ferrymen and make up the inner circle of the society. It is believed that death delvers who acquire the last level in this prestige class are exalted to some final rank, but nobody who is not of that innermost circle knows what title or privilege goes along with this exaltation.

Perhaps the most famous of all death delvers was the co-founder of the Sacred Shroud, an inscrutable man by the name of Volculos. According to legend, Volculos was a high priest who suddenly renounced both his faith and his god after a lifetime of service. Nobody knows what spurred this drastic change, but shortly after leaving the priesthood he co-founded the Society of the Sacred Shroud with two other theo-thanatological scholars. After twelve years of building and expanding the organization—long enough for the brightest of the first crop of death delvers to advance to ferryman status—Volculos vanished from his chapter house without a trace. Even the best scholars of his own society were at a loss to explain where he'd gone. According to legend, even their strongest divinations showed only empty pools of blackness.

NPC Reactions

To say that death delvers can expect a wide variety of reactions from NPCs is an understatement. The death delvers' obsession with death and dying strikes many NPCs as bordering on the macabre, and there are many who would sooner listen to cats singing than spend an evening in the company of a death delver. Others value the healing skills for which death delvers are known and appreciate having them around for obvious and practical reasons. A few priesthoods disapprove of the Sacred Shroud's mission and thus respond negatively to the presence of a death delver. For the most part, unless a given NPC has had prior interactions with a death delver, he will likely react to one in whatever manner befits the context of their first meeting. For the archetypically grim death delver, this can result in an indifferent reaction; those who make an attempt at winning people over usually find their efforts rewarded with the other responding in kind.

Death delvers are generally friendly to one another once identities have been mutually revealed. Sometimes a death delver has a standing order to pass along certain information or a certain request on behalf of the Sacred Shroud. On these occasions, the death delver receiving the message is expected to take the information or do his best to accommodate whatever request was made, even if he must leave his party or otherwise inconvenience them in order to do so.

DEATH DELVER LORE

Characters with Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge can research the death delvers to learn more about them. When a character makes a successful skill check, read or paraphrase the following information.

DC 10: Rumor tells of a secret society devoted to exploring the mysteries of death.

DC 15: Some death-obsessed truth-seekers, called death delvers, have powers that rival those of necromancers.

DC 20: Death delvers gather in a society called the Sacred Shroud, which has members scattered all over creation.

DC 30: According to legend, one of the founders of the Sacred Shroud—a man named Volculos—was a former priest who renounced his god in favor of the death delver way. One night, he vanished without trace.

Any spellcaster who witnesses a death delver casting a spell can make a DC 20 Spellcraft check to notice that, even though the source of the magic seems to be divine, it lacks the stamp of any particular deity. Likewise, those with Knowledge (religion) can make a DC 25 skill check to notice that a death

delver's magical trappings do not correspond to that of any known deity. (Even clerical death delvers reveal the nature of their magic when casting death delver spells.)

DEATH DELVERS IN THE GAME

The death delver prestige class appeals to players who want unusual or untraditional paths for their characters. The fact that the death delver is not especially rooted in any one or two of the core classes is a testament to its versatility, and it remains an interesting option for those whose characters led complex or unorthodox lives at lower levels. Almost every party can benefit from the inclusion of a death delver, because the class is designed to complement whatever core class preceded it, rather than extend or replace it.

Adaptation

The death delver was designed for horror campaigns but doesn't require any of the new systems or mechanics introduced in this book and can be dropped into just about any campaign world. Want to run a game without corruption and depravity? No problem—the death delver's focus has nothing whatever to do with taint. In the event that your campaign world can't accommodate the notion of a divine caster with no specific divine patron, simply make the Sacred Shroud an organization within or an offshoot of the priesthood of whatever god of death exists in the setting.

Sample Encounters

When the PCs come across the site of a recent battle, they could encounter one journeyman death delver and his cauled apprentice making their way among the corpses of the fallen. Not knowing who they are, a conflict could ensue, especially after the PCs see some of the dead rise of their own accord.

EL 9: Everin the death delver and his assistant Gusharm (human monk 5/death delver 1) are trying to complete a ritual unmolested when the PCs arrive. They won't take kindly to any manner of interference.

EVERIN **CR 8**

Male human cleric 5/death delver 3
NE Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 52 (8 HD)
Immune fear
Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +10

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee *+1 light mace* +7 (1d6+2)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +6
Special Action death touch 1/day (5d6), rebuke undead 3/day (+2, 2d6+8, 8th), spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells)
Combat Gear *dust of disappearance*
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th):
3rd—*animate dead*[D], *dispel magic, speak with dead* (DC 17)
2nd—*detect thoughts*[D] (CL 6th; DC 15), *hold person* (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon*
1st—*bane* (DC 14), *cause fear*[D] (DC 15), *command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds, sanctuary* (DC 14)
0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic* (CL 6th), *detect poison* (CL 6th), *resistance, virtue*
D: Domain spell. Domains: Death, Knowledge
Death Delver Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):
2nd—*rigor mortis** (DC 16)
1st—*bless, lesser restoration*
*New spell described on page 132

Abilities Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 10
SQ deathsense (*death watch* at will, free action), *death ward* 1/day (3 hours duration)
Feats Combat Casting, Endurance, Extend Spell, Spell Focus (necromancy)
Skills Concentration (8 ranks), Heal (6 ranks), Knowledge (religion) (6 ranks), Listen (2 ranks), Spellcraft (4 ranks), Spot (2 ranks)
Possessions combat gear plus hourglass, purple shroud, heavy wooden shield, *+1 light mace, +1 chainmail*

EL 12: The PCs have angered Belig, a Shroud ferryman, by killing two of his fellow death delvers. He wants justice.

BELIG **CR 12**

Male dwarf monk 5/death delver 7
LE Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +5
Aura fear (30 ft., Will DC 19 or panicked for 7 rounds, affects undead)
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 15; Dodge, Mobility, Deflect Arrows; +4 AC against giants
hp 90 (12 HD)
Immune fear, coup de grace (automatically succeed on Fortitude save), disease, hit point damage from bleeding (from *periapt of wound closure*)
Resist +2 on saves against spells and spell-like effects, evasion, stability (+4 against bull rush and trip)
Fort +12 (+14 against poison), **Ref** +7, **Will** +12 (+14 against enchantments)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee unarmed strike +10/+5 (1d8+2) or
Melee unarmed strike +9/+9/+4 (1d8+2) with flurry of blows
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +10
Atk Options *ki* strike (magic), Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Stunning Fist, +1 on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids
Special Action spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells), rebuke undead 5/day (+1, 2d6+7, 7th)
Death Delver Spells Prepared (CL 7th):
3rd—*animate dead, deep slumber* (DC 16)
2nd—*command undead* (DC 15), *rigor mortis** (DC 15)
1st—*cause fear* (DC 14) (2), *hide from undead* (DC 14)
*New spell described on page 132

Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 14
SQ cheat death (7 lives remaining), deathsense (*death watch* at will, free action), *death ward* 2/day (7 hours duration), evasion, slow fall 20 ft., stonecunning
Feats Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows[B], Diehard[B], Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike[B], Mobility, Power Attack, Spirit Sense*, Stunning Fist[B]
*New feat described on page 124
Skills Balance (5 ranks), Climb (5 ranks), Concentration (10 ranks), Heal (5 ranks), Hide (5 ranks), Intimidate (5 ranks), Knowledge (religion) (8 ranks), Jump (5 ranks), Spot (2 ranks)
Possessions hourglass, black shroud, *amulet of natural armor +2, ring of protection +2, gauntlets of ogre power, periapt of wound closure*

DREAD WITCH

"Fear cuts more deeply than any sword, consumes more completely than any spell. It rages like a conflagration, burning away the flesh of the weak, burning the weakness out of the strong. Fear is power, and that power is mine."

—Illyra Zorren, dread witch,
to her first apprentice

The dread witch is a spellcaster who manipulates fear as readily and effectively as other casters manipulate magic itself. Drawing power from her own fear, she can cause even the brave to run screaming into the night or drop to their knees and beg for mercy. A dread witch is at her most dangerous when cornered and overpowered; at high levels dread witches are among the most terrifying of opponents—literally.

BECOMING A DREAD WITCH

The path of the bard or sorcerer is the most efficient way to become a dread witch. Most dread witches are innate spellcasters, and their various abilities based on force of personality (that is, Charisma) make such spellcasters more efficient. Wizards can become dread witches as well, with the proper course of study, but it doesn't come to them quite as easily. Charisma is the primary requirement, in order to make the most efficient use of her class features. Intelligence is useful for skill points (and for spells, if she is a wizard). As always, Constitution grants hit points, the better to survive frightening circumstances.

Entry Requirements

Saving Throws: Base Will save +4
Skills: Knowledge (arcana) 3 ranks
Spellcasting: Ability to cast *cause fear* and *scare*
Special: Must have suffered at least one fear effect against which he failed his save

CLASS FEATURES

Dread witches sacrifice a level of spellcasting advancement in order to gain immense power over fear itself—both their own and that of others.

Spellcasting: At every dread witch level except 1st, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class you belonged to before you added the prestige class. You do not, however, gain any other class benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a dread witch, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Master of Terror (Ex): Your fear-based spells become more potent. The save DC of any spell you cast with the fear descriptor increases by 1. This bonus stacks with Spell Focus. Furthermore, add the spells *bane* and *doom* to your arcane spellcaster list as 2nd-level spells.

In addition, you become adept at making people uneasy with the right word, expression, or gesture. You gain a bonus to all Intimidate skill checks equal to +2 per class level.

Unnatural Will (Ex): You gain Unnatural Will (see page 124) as a bonus feat, even if you do not meet the prerequisites.

Absorb Fear (Su): Starting at 2nd level, you can turn your own fear, whether natural or mystical in origin, into extra power for your spells. (See Dread on page 59 for more on nonmagical fear.) Any time you are exposed to a condition that could make you shaken, all your spells function at +1 caster level; if the condition could make you frightened, they function at +2 caster level; if panicked, they function at +3 caster level. These bonuses last for the duration of the fear effect, or for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier, whichever is less. (Of course, if you fail your saving throw against the condition, you might not be in a position to use the bonuses, but you do have them.) These bonuses are treated in all ways as though you had failed the save. In other words, if you are subject to a spell that causes panic on a failed save but only frightens those who make the save, you gain the bonus from being panicked even if you make the save.

You can, instead of gaining these bonuses, choose to cast a single extra spell; this casting does not use up a spell slot. You must make this choice the instant you are subject to the fear effect, and once you have made your choice you must cast the spell within a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier. You can cast an additional cantrip if shaken, an additional 1st-level spell if frightened, or an additional 2nd-level spell if panicked.

If you are subject to a second fear effect while still enjoying the effects of the first—either the granted benefits or holding the extra spell—you must decide whether to keep the original effect or replace it with the new one; you cannot benefit from more than one fear effect at a time.

Fearful Empowerment (Su): Starting at 3rd level, once per day you can add the fear descriptor to any spell you cast that has some sort of visual manifestation. For example, you could apply it to a *fireball*, to a *summon monster* spell, or

Table 5–5: The Dread Witch Hit Die: d4

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Master of terror, Unnatural Will	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Absorb fear	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Fearful empowerment 1/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Delay fear, greater master of terror	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Fearful empowerment 2/day, horrific aura, reflective fear	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Craft, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (the planes), Profession, and Spellcraft.

to any visual illusion, but not to *charm person*, since that spell does not directly create any visual effect. Creatures targeted by a spell modified by fearful empowerment must make a Will save (DC equal to 10 + your class level + your Cha modifier) or become shaken for 1d4 rounds; this is in addition to any other effects the spell might have. Your save DC bonuses from master of terror apply to this spell.

At 5th level, you can invoke this power twice per day.

Delay Fear (Su): Starting at 4th level, you can choose to delay the onset of any fear effect you impose on someone else, such as by casting a *cause fear* spell. You can delay the onset up to a number of minutes equal to your Charisma modifier. You must determine the onset time when casting the spell, and you cannot later change your mind.

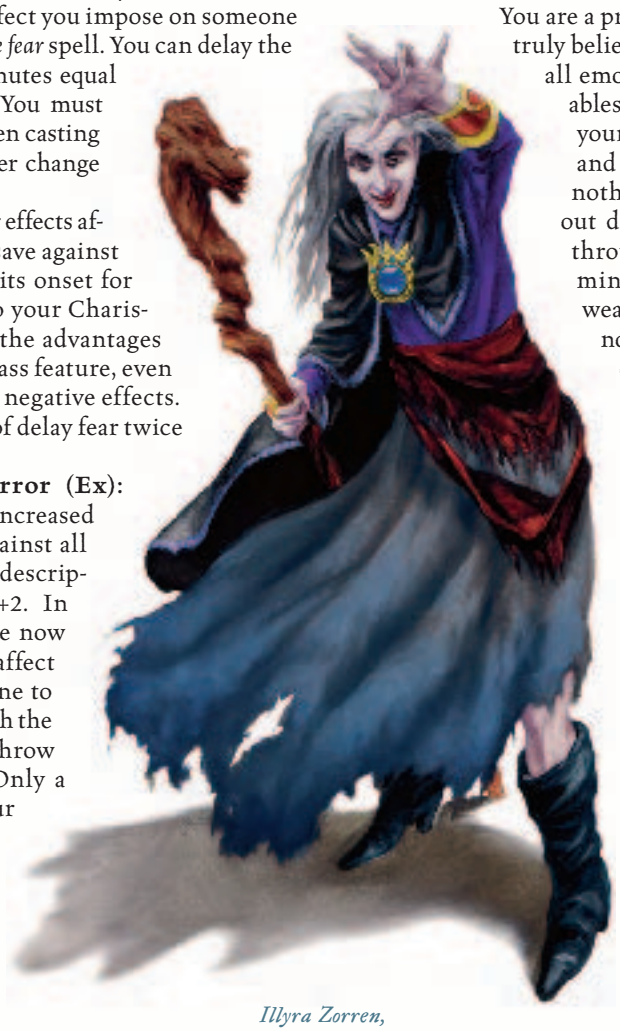
Similarly, you can delay fear effects affecting you. If you fail your save against a fear effect, you can delay its onset for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier. You still gain the advantages granted by the absorb fear class feature, even though you are delaying the negative effects. You can invoke this version of delay fear twice per day.

Greater Master of Terror (Ex): Beginning at 4th level, the increased difficulty of all save DCs against all spells you cast with the fear descriptor increases from +1 to +2. In addition, your fear spells are now so potent that they can even affect individuals normally immune to fear, such as paladins, although the subject still gains a saving throw to resist the spell's effect. Only a target whose HD exceed your caster level by 4 or more is immune to your mastery of terror. For instance, if you are a sorcerer 7/dread witch 4 (overall caster level 10), a paladin of 14th level or higher is immune to your fear spells.

Horrific Aura (Su): At 5th level, you radiate an aura of terror. Creatures with 6 or fewer HD must succeed in a Will save (DC equal to 10 + your class level + your Cha modifier) or remain shaken as long as they are within 10 feet of you. A creature who successfully saves is immune to your horrific aura for 24 hours. Creatures of greater than 6 HD are unaffected.

Once per day per point of Charisma modifier, you can channel this aura into a potent touch attack. Creatures struck by this horrific touch attack who fail their Will save (see above) are panicked for 1d4+1 rounds; creatures who succeed on their save are shaken for 1 round. This touch attack, unlike the standard aura, functions against creatures of any HD and can even affect individuals normally immune to fear.

Reflective Fear (Su): At 5th level, any fear effect against which you successfully save is immediately targeted back at the source. You still gain the benefits of absorb fear. If the source of the fear effect fails its save, everyone else who might have been subject to the fear effect (such as your companions) immediately gains a second saving throw to shake off the effects, as they observe the object of their fear itself grow terrified.



Illyra Zorren, Dread Witch

PLAYING A DREAD WITCH

You are a practitioner of the occult arts who truly believes that fear is the most potent of all emotions. Controlling your fear enables you to more effectively channel your spells. Fear gives you strength and focuses your mind in a way that nothing else can. You actively seek out dangerous experiences, for only through dread can you forge your mind and soul into the keenest of weapons. You are neither foolhardy nor suicidal; you just recognize that overcoming danger is the most direct path to knowledge and power. You probably give your companions the creeps, since you consider fear just another tool or experience and are frankly not bothered by sights and events that other people consider disturbing in the extreme. (Or at least, you try to *appear* unbothered.)

Dread witches have no organization or guild to speak of. Each practitioner follows a tradition with its own line of descent, as masters pass their secrets and techniques on to apprentices. Dread witches recognize one another as fellow students of a demanding discipline but otherwise feel no strong connection with other members of the prestige class. Sorcerers and bards who stumble upon the secrets of fear magic do not share any sense of camaraderie; dread witches who once were wizards, and who must deliberately choose to embark upon this path, sometimes feel a stronger bond.

Combat

Dread witches make use of the same general combat tactics as most arcane casters—that is, stay back from melee and use your spells to either destroy opponents or enhance your companions' abilities.

As you gain power as a dread witch, however, you acquire options that standard casters do not possess. By exposing yourself to danger, you make yourself more powerful, all the while letting your enemy believe he has the upper hand before you suddenly turn the tables. Combining standard

Illus. by R. Gallegos

offensive spells with fear effects enables you to drive dangerous foes away from your companions or possibly maneuver your foes into an ambush.

At higher levels, you can protect your allies from fear effects and sow chaos in enemy ranks by striking them with delayed fear effects. With a sufficiently long delay time, the enemy might be completely ignorant of the source of their terror, failing to associate it with you and your companions. This strategy can ruin any sort of coordination or tactics they might attempt, leaving them open to counterattack and other disruptions. In addition, your various fear effects are useful as interrogation techniques, especially considering your hefty bonuses to Intimidate checks.

Advancement

Since dread witches have no formal organization, no true recruitment occurs. Spontaneous arcane casters such as bards and sorcerers discover they have an aptitude for fear spells, and either advance on their own through trial and error or seek out individual dread witches from whom they can learn. In the case of wizards, an apprentice might discover that her master studies an odd discipline of magic, or she might read of dread witches and seek one out to learn his secrets, or she might come across an old spellbook left behind by a dread witch. In the case of an apprenticeship, it is the elder dread witch who decides whether an applicant is worthy, and she can set whatever conditions she chooses. Training as a dread witch is much like advancement in any other arcane class, save that the student is inevitably exposed to more dangerous situations, illusions, and fear effects, the better to familiarize her with her own fear and enable her to control it.

Resources

Other than the arcane versions of *bane* and *doom*, which wizard-based dread witches can only learn from other dread witches, there is nothing for which you must go to another dread witch.

DREAD WITCHES IN THE WORLD

"Creepy as an undead spider, powerful as all Hells—and crazy bastards, the whole lot of 'em. Only thing scarier than facing a dread witch across a battlefield is having one fighting beside you."

—Tolliver Withers, former adventurer,
now sheriff of the halfling community of Fairnuff

The dread witch is a viable addition to any setting but is particularly appropriate to a horror campaign. Dread witches are a logical result of spellcasters dwelling in a world of great danger and fear, and they represent an occult and scholastic effort at not only controlling that fear but harnessing its emotional energies. If your campaign involves horrors from other worlds, such as the strange alien entities of the Far Realm, the fear magic of the dread witch might be tied into those forces. Alternatively, it might bear some relation to psionic studies, or to the arts practiced by fearsome and emotion-manipulating creatures such as mind flayers or the quori. For players, this prestige class provides an opportunity to take advantage of the fear their characters experience, using it to empower a character and become a bogeyman to the monsters rather than the other way around, without weakening the mood of the game itself.

Organization

No universal organization of dread witches exists, though many individuals believe one does. This belief stems from the mysterious persona of many dread witches, the knowledge and abilities dread witches share, and superstition, which attributes guilds or cabals to many powerful casters. Common folk often treat dread witches accordingly, assuming that each knows of (and supports) the activities of her fellows and has met them all personally.

Occasionally, some ambitious dread witch has attempted to take the various solitary practitioners and masters of this difficult discipline and forge them into a true organization. Every effort to date has failed; dread witches seem little disposed to band together. Given the difficult situations required to advance their mastery of the craft, most dread witches prefer to travel and practice with companions of varied skills. Furthermore, although the techniques of the dread witch differ from those of other spellcasters, the majority of their spells do not, making it unnecessary for most dread witches to spend much time in the company of their fellows.

Still, some continue to try to build an organization. The famed dread witch archmage Illyra Zorren, acknowledged in arcane circles as one of the most potent masters of dread magic alive, is the latest to attempt to unify this widespread and scattered discipline. She has trained half a dozen apprentices in the course of her long life, and each of them is devoutly loyal to Zorren herself and to her dream of a united organization of dread witches. Combined with a few others who have sporadically joined her over the years, Zorren leads a cabal of slightly over a dozen members. Though hardly a true guild, this does represent the largest known assemblage of dread witches. Zorren, now quite aged, is rumored to be seeking the ritual for lichdom so that she can continue building her society.

NPC Reactions

Most people know nothing of the difference between dread witches and standard arcane casters. Such folk react to the dread witch no differently than they would to any other spellcasting character, although they might feel uneasy in her presence for reasons they cannot define. Those who know of dread witches, however, tend to regard them with no small amount of suspicion and—appropriately enough—fear. Not only do dread witches study a strange school of magic, they deliberately toy with the emotions of others. They invoke terror and chaos with their magic and draw power from experiences that would set others to huddling in the corner. Many of these people assume dread witches are evil, or at least uncaring and manipulative, and react accordingly. The average individual who knows of dread witches but has no reason to disbelieve the public perception begins any interaction with a known dread witch as one step less friendly than normal. (For instance, someone who is normally indifferent to strangers would instead be unfriendly.) Such individuals never begin interaction with an attitude better than indifferent.

Many normal wizards and sorcerers distrust dread witches due to their strange methods of manipulating magic. Certain monsters that have abilities to cause fear or otherwise manipulate emotions consider dread witches to be serious threats, and either avoid them or hunt them down.

DREAD WITCH LORE

Characters with Knowledge (arcana) can research dread witches to learn more about them.

DC 10: The dread witch is an arcane caster who focuses on the manipulation of fear.

DC 15: The dread witch is not only skilled at causing terror in others, her own power increases when she's frightened.

DC 20: The dread witch can evoke fear in others through apparently mundane spells, or cause someone to grow suddenly terrified long after she's cursed him. The more dangerous the situation in which she finds herself, the more potent her magic becomes.

Alternatively, similar information might be learned through bardic knowledge checks, or Gather Information checks made in wizards guilds or high-magic communities.

DREAD WITCHES IN THE GAME

It's not difficult to work a dread witch into an ongoing campaign. Their numbers are few, they are largely scattered, and their techniques do not appear, on casual inspection, to be all that different from those of other arcane casters. It's entirely possible that dread witches have always existed, part of an ancient tradition, and the PCs have simply never encountered them before. Alternatively, the study of terror magic might be a new art, perhaps introduced by research wizards in response to the appearance of taint in the campaign world or by a sorcerer who found she had spontaneously developed defenses against fear effects.

Dread witches are most useful when the PCs frequently engage in combat with large numbers of slightly weaker opponents (rendering the dread witch's fear effects most potent) or when the PCs face challenges slightly above their normal range (rendering the dread witch's spells more powerful). Be certain to include a reasonable number of such encounters, or battles against fear-causing creatures, to give the dread witch the chance to shine.

Adaptation

Dread witches excel in campaigns that make use of the various fear and dread rules presented in Chapter 4. In games that do not use those rules, the class becomes a bit less effective because less fear means fewer fear effects to empower her class abilities. In these circumstances, the DM might consider creating more situations that invoke the dread witch's fear abilities or allowing the empowerment to last for longer periods.

Sample Encounters

The PCs are most likely to encounter dread witches in high-magic communities, where people have access to esoteric types of knowledge, or in rural or wilderness areas affected by taint. Most dread witches are adventurers, so anything that draws the PCs' attention might attract a dread witch as well. Evil and ambitious dread witches often use their abilities to browbeat and control others, so the PCs might encounter one as the leader of a band of marauding humanoids or a growing cult.

EL 8: Suhnak Olun, a hobgoblin dread witch, and his followers (6 standard hobgoblins) have invaded a small village on the borderlands. He has the townsfolk wrapped tight in a grip of fear, both magical and mundane, and their only hope of rescue comes from the outside.

SUHNAK OLUN **CR 7**

Male hobgoblin sorcerer 5/dread witch 2
LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Goblin, Orc, empathic link

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12
hp 39 (7 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6 (+9 against fear)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee masterwork spear +4 (1d8/×3)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3
Atk Options Silent Spell, Still Spell
Combat Gear *dust of illusion, potion of cure light wounds, potion of jump*
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 6th, 7th if shaken, 8th if frightened, 9th if panicked):
3rd (4/day)—*major image* (DC 17)
2nd (6/day)—*bane* (DC 16), *doom* (DC 16), *minor image* (DC 16), *scare* (DC 16)
1st (7/day)—*cause fear* (DC 15), *ray of enfeeblement* (+4 ranged touch), *shield*
0 (6/day)—*dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 14), *mage hand, message, prestidigitation, touch of fatigue* (+3 melee touch, DC 13)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 17
SQ familiar, share spells, master of terror (+1 to DC of fear spells)
Feats Awareness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Silent Spell, Spell Focus (illusion), Still Spell, Unnatural Will[B]
Skills Bluff +7, Concentration +8, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +6
Possessions combat gear plus *bracers of armor +2,* masterwork spear, spell component pouch

HAWK FAMILIAR **CR —**

N Tiny magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +14
Languages empathic link, speak with master

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17
hp 20 (7 HD)
Resist improved evasion
Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 60 ft. (average)
Melee talons +6 (1d4–2)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** –7
Atk Options deliver touch spells

Abilities Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 6
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Hide +11, Listen +2, Spot +14

EL 18: Illyra Zorren focuses largely on her goal of assembling a true order of dread witches, but of late she has also

devoted some attention to attaining lichdom or some other form of undeath or eternal life, in order to continue her efforts beyond her natural span. Zorren has little interest in ruling land or attacking others. She is determined to learn all she can when it comes to both of her goals and will show no hesitation in walking over anyone who stands in her way but harbors no vindictiveness against those who are no longer an obstacle. The PCs might encounter her investigating an ancient catacomb for mystic secrets or engaged in political maneuvers against a wizards guild attempting to block her efforts.

Illyra Zorren **CR 18**

Female human wizard 9/dread witch 5/archmage 4
N Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2
Aura horrific aura (10 ft., up to 6 HD, Will DC 18 or shaken)
Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Halfling, Ignan, Orc, empathic link

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 46 (18 HD)
Resist reflective fear (successful save against fear effect turns it back at source)
Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +17 (+20 against fear)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +6/+0 (1d6–2)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +6
Atk Options arcane reach (use touch spells up to 30 feet away, +7 ranged touch), fearful empowerment 2/day (add fear to spells with visual manifestations, Will DC 20 or shaken for 1d4 rounds), delay fear (up to 3 minutes), greater master of terror (+2 to DC of fear spells, fear spells affect targets immune to fear of less than 21 HD), mastery of shaping (leave holes in spell areas), spell power (+1 CL)
Special Action arcane fire (channel spell into bolt dealing 4d6 + 1d6/spell level, +7 ranged touch), horrific touch 3/day (+6 melee touch; Will DC 18 or panicked for 1d4+1 rounds, affects even fearless creatures)
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 18th, 19th if shaken, 20th if frightened, 21th if panicked):
8th—*horrid wilting* (DC 27), *mass charm monster* (DC 28)
7th—*control weather, greater arcane sight, spell turning*
6th—*chain lightning* (DC 26), *eyebite* (DC 25), *greater dispel magic, symbol of fear* (DC 27)
5th—*break enchantment, cone of cold* (DC 25), *dominate person* (DC 25), *teleport*
4th—*charm monster* (DC 24), *enervation* (+7 ranged touch), *fear* (DC 24), *phantasmal killer* (DC 24), *scrying* (DC 22)
3rd—*dispel magic, fireball* (DC 23), *fly, protection from energy, suggestion* (DC 23), *vampiric touch* (+6 melee touch)
2nd—*bane* (DC 24), *cat's grace, detect thoughts, doom* (DC 22), *scare* (DC 24), *touch of idiocy* (+6 melee touch)
1st—*cause fear* (DC 21), *charm person* (DC 23), *feather fall, identify, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (+7 ranged touch)
0—*detect magic, prestidigitation, read magic, touch of fatigue* (+6 melee touch, DC 18)

Abilities Str 7, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 25, Wis 15, Cha 16
SQ absorb fear (+1 to caster level if shaken, +2 if frightened, +3 if panicked or gain and cast bonus spell), delay fear (3 rounds, 2/day), familiar, share spells
Feats Awareness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Dreamtelling*, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Greater Spell Focus (evocation), Oneiromancy*, Quicken Spell[B], Scribe Scroll[B], Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (evocation), Unnatural Will[B]
*New feat described on page 123.
Skills Bluff +16, Concentration +14, Craft (alchemy) +21, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +20, Knowledge (history) +21, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +29, Spellcraft +28
Possessions *amulet of health +6, bracers of armor +2, cloak of resistance 1, ring of protection +3, tome of clear thought +4* (already read)

†Although Zorren does not prepare it regularly, as she only needs to cast it once every 19 days (or until discharged), she is constantly under the effects of a *contingency* spell. If she is ever reduced to less than 1/4 her hit points, she is instantly *teleported* to a distant sanctuary.

Cat Familiar **CR —**

N Tiny magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages empathic link, speak with master, speak with felines

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 17
hp 23 (18 HD)
Resist improved evasion
Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee 2 claws +10 (1d2–4) and bite +5 (1d3–4)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +8; **Grp** –4
Atk Options deliver touch spells

Abilities Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +10, Climb +6, Concentration +14, Hide +14, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3

FIEND-BLOODED

"The power that flows through my veins was born of the Pit, but that power—like my soul—is my own to command."
—Ariana Crattus, daughter of the Marquis Teresius Crattus of the House of Crattus

Every now and then, a fiend or half-fiend will find its way to the lands of the humanoid races and, in the guise of a mortal man or woman (or, in especially rare and gruesome cases, not), take a native mortal for its lover. Generations later, the mortal descendants of such a union occasionally display a natural talent for the arcane arts. Those who pursue magical study in earnest begin to feel a calling from deep within their flesh, whispering of the hidden power of their fiendish heritage. With careful exploration, such a spellcaster can slowly bring the power of that lineage to the surface, shaping it to his own purposes—to focus and empower his own magical advancement.

BECOMING A FIEND-BLOODED

Clearly, the sorcerer is the shortest path to becoming one of the fiend-blooded, but bards can also qualify with ease. Both have Concentration and Knowledge (arcana) as class

skills, and both can meet the spellcasting requirements before 6th level. Charisma (for spellcasting and dealing with those who look askance at permitting characters with fiendish heritage in their midst) and Intelligence (for the skills required) are the key abilities for a potential fiend-blooded.

Entry Requirements

Race: Any humanoid race (cannot already be a half-fiend)
Alignment: Any nongood alignment
Skills: Concentration 8 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 8 ranks, Knowledge (the planes) 8 ranks
Feats: Blood Calls to Blood*, Eschew Materials
Spellcasting: Must be able to cast 2nd-level arcane spells without preparation
*New feat described on page 120.

CLASS FEATURES

The fiend-blooded bring aspects of their fiendish forebear to the surface as they advance in levels in this class. This sinister heritage gives them strength in specific areas and lends their spellcasting a decidedly fiendish edge.

Spellcasting: At each new fiend-blooded level except for 10th, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adopting the prestige class. You do not gain any other class benefit a member of that class would normally gain, except that your fiend-blooded levels also stack with any other arcane spellcaster levels for the purpose of determining familiar abilities. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a fiend-blooded, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Fiendish Companion: Your familiar benefits from your fiendish heritage. The fiendish template (described on page 108 of the *Monster Manual*) can be applied to your familiar, if you so desire. Since this is not possession but rather a sympathetic link, the familiar's alignment need not shift to evil.

Fiendish Heritage (Ex): You draw strength from your fiendish ancestor's essence as you gain increased mastery over your lineage.

At 1st level, a subtle toughening of your physical form grants you a +1 natural armor bonus to AC.

At 3rd level, you gain a +1 boost to your Charisma score.

At 5th level, you gain a +1 boost to your Intelligence score.

At 7th level, you gain a +1 boost to your Dexterity score.

At 9th level, you gain a +1 boost to your Constitution score.

Fiendish Sorcery: You gain insight into the power of your fiendish heritage, and this insight strengthens your spellcasting prowess. At 2nd level, and again at 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, add one additional spell to your spells known list. Each new spell must be of a level that you can cast but can be any spell having the fire descriptor or any spell from the schools of enchantment, illusion, or necromancy. Thus, you could add *fireball* (a fire spell) or *speak with dead* (a necromancy spell) to your 3rd-level spells known (even though you are an arcane caster and *speak with dead* is normally a divine spell), but not *lightning bolt* (which neither carries the fire descriptor nor belongs to one of the three specified schools).

Blood of Fiends (Ex): Upon reaching 3rd level, you gain a +1 bonus on saves against poison. You also reduce any damage taken from poison (whether hit point or ability damage) by 1 point.

Starting at 6th level, your fiendish essence grants you resistance to cold and fire 5.

Upon reaching 9th level, you have unlocked much of the power of your fiendish lineage, gaining resistance to acid and electricity 5.

Smiting Spell (Su): If you are a fiend-blooded of at least 4th level, you can as a free action, once per day, invest a portion of your fiendish power into any damaging spell you cast. The resulting spell will deal an additional number of hit points of damage equal to your fiend-blooded class level + Charisma modifier to all within the spell's area.

Starting at 8th level, you can use smiting spell twice per day.

Fiendish Exaltation (Ex): At 10th level, you unlock the final secrets buried within your lineage. In addition to the ability boosts you gained from your fiendish heritage, you now gain an additional +1 to Dexterity, Constitution, and Intelligence, and +2 to Strength. You also gain complete immunity to poison, and damage reduction 10/magic.

Table 5–6: The Fiend-Blooded **Hit Die: d4**

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Fiendish companion, fiendish heritage +1 AC	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Fiendish sorcery	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Blood of fiends +1 saves, fiendish heritage +1 Cha	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Fiendish sorcery, smiting spell 1/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Fiendish heritage +1 Int	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Blood of fiends cold/fire res. 5, fiendish sorcery	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Fiendish heritage +1 Dex	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Fiendish sorcery, smiting spell 2/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Blood of fiends acid/electricity res. 5, fiendish heritage +1 Con	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Fiendish exaltation, fiendish sorcery	—

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Bluff, Concentration, Intimidation, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (the planes), and Spellcraft.

Setios, Fiend-Blooded

Illus. by S. Prescott

PLAYING A FIEND-BLOODED

Due to your fiendish lineage, and the questions such lineage inevitably raises, you have gotten used to playing your cards close to your chest. Even if good-aligned, you know the price you might have to pay for someone else's ignorance and often find discretion the better part of valor. You are not antisocial—far from it!—but you opt to be guarded in choosing with whom you interact and why. Most of the time, it pays to play up the reputation of sorcerers and bards as chaotic and unusual individuals, the better to deflect otherwise dangerous suspicions from you and your activities.

Most members of this prestige class are solitary individuals, each as unique as your own unusual heritage would suggest. You might never meet another fiend-blooded over the course of your adventuring career and, if you do, you might not realize it. The exception lies in a fiend-blooded house, whose members tend to bear a family resemblance (see sidebar).

Good-aligned characters born into a fiend-blooded house typically distance themselves from their depraved kin. Membership in such a family is a two-edged sword; those seeking to curry favor with your family might flatter or aid you, whereas those repulsed by your family's deeds might automatically be hostile. If you belong to such a house, you have learned to suspect the motives of everyone you meet. You find it hard to judge others on the basis of their behavior and not their ancestry.

Combat

Your fiendish heritage makes you a powerful spellcaster, proficient with a variety of deceptive and damaging spells. Complementing this magical prowess is a physical capability beyond that of the average cloistered mage. This is not to say that you should join the fighters on the front line, but the small edge you have might be enough to get the better of a startled opponent.

Thanks to the fiendish blood in your veins, you become resistant to poison and certain energy forms as you advance in levels, and you can put this ability to good use. For example, you could comfortably grapple an opponent who was on fire, or run through a snowstorm with little fear of hypothermia.

Once you have become a high-level fiend-blooded, you are a devastating opponent. Your spell selection is slightly larger than that of many spontaneous spellcasters, and you are capable of dealing extra damage once or twice per day by means of your smiting spell ability. By 10th level, the damage reduction you have acquired means you can stand toe to toe with opponents who lack magical weapons.

Advancement

When you began your training in the arcane arts, you felt an inmost tug, as of some secret voice within whispering messages of hidden power. Once you had grasped enough of magic to realize what that secret voice signified, you made the willing choice to explore the nature of your calling, and in so doing embarked upon the path of the fiend-blooded.

As you advance in levels in the prestige class, you unlock more and more of the potential hidden within you. You must either embrace your fiendish heritage—body and soul—as traits of your fiendish ancestor develop in both your physical form and your magic, or you must focus all your will to keep your independence as the negative aspects threaten to take control. No outside force is necessary for your advancement, and indeed such a force would only complicate your extremely personal quest of self-transformation.

Few fiend-blooded abandon this path after having set foot on it, for the lure of self-discovery is great. Nevertheless, some good-aligned fiend-blooded grow uncomfortable with the ways in which they are changing and choose to stop advancing in the class at some point. For most, however, the notion of abandoning the class before reaching the highest possible level is a ludicrous one. Members of fiend-blooded houses are particularly unlikely to abandon the prestige class, for advancement and opportunity within the family are inexorably linked with a house member's progress in the class.

Resources

It's wisest to expect little in the way of aid from your fellow fiend-blooded. Among solitary members of the prestige class, the discovery of a fellow fiend-blooded is more often an invitation to murder a potential rival as quickly as possible than to extend a helping hand. If you are a member of a fiend-blooded house, you can expect to receive

considerable aid, in the form of monetary endowments, training in new skills and spells, or inside information, so long as you stay in good standing with the head of the house. Unfortunately, maintaining that status requires you to carry out all manner of unsavory tasks for the head of the house, from assassinations and murders to pinning various dire or disgusting crimes on those who stand in the way of the house's activities.

FIEND-BLOODED IN THE WORLD

"Oh, Ariana's a blast . . . literally. If you want to see what I mean, just ask her about her daddy."

—Quip of Sigil, long-time adventuring and drinking companion

Given the prevalence of demons and devils in most campaign worlds, the existence of the fiend-blooded is easy to accept, requiring little explanation on introducing the class into your game. Since the fiend-blooded appear much the same as ordinary sorcerers or bards, they could have existed in the campaign all along, although they might now be stepping up their activity. In addition to making excellent, three-dimensional player characters, the fiend-blooded make terrific villains. Any local noble family or great merchant house could turn out to be a family of the fiend-blooded, bent on directing all the money and power in an area into their own hands.

Organization

The fiend-blooded are either loners or members of fiend-blooded houses.

The head of a given house is known by whatever term is common to the facade the house employs. Among the more common male titles are Baron, Count, Duke, Guildmaster, Lord, Master, Majordomo, and Marquis, with female titles being more or less equivalent (Baroness, Countess, Duchess, and so forth). Whatever he or she is called, the head of the house is the undisputed patriarch (or matriarch) of the family. He alone communes with the house's fiendish patron, on whatever plane of existence it might reside, and he alone directs the fortunes of the house as a whole. The role of patriarch only passes to another upon the death of the former patriarch, so the plotting and scheming in a house is intense and unending.

Much of a given house's daily operation depends on the lineage of its founder. Houses with a demonic patron bear an echo of that fiend's chaotic sensibilities and can best be described as states of controlled anarchy. Conversely, houses with infernal patrons tend to be much more ordered and hierarchical, with complex systems of rank among family members based on an interaction between seniority and achievement. Regardless of patron, fiend-blooded house members are expected to follow the dictates of their patriarchs—though the fiend-blooded, like their namesakes, are notorious for their capacity to pervert the spirit of an order while preserving the letter of the command.

Some houses, especially merchant houses, are largely merit-based. In these houses, advancement goes to those who achieve the most or do the most to help the house prosper. The fiend-blooded on the whole respect both ambition and strength of will; the surest way for a character to advance in the ranks of a fiend-blooded house is to unlock his own potential and prove to both the patriarch and fellow house members that he is worthy of status within the family. After house loyalty, personal accomplishment is the surest path to glory. Developing new spells, defeating rivals in such a way as to emerge unscathed from the final battle, or pulling off a spectacular act of treachery are all much admired.

NPC Reactions

Luckily for them, the fiend-blooded are not easy to detect on sight. They strive to blend in, and the most adept and long-lived among them are accomplished at avoiding unwanted attention. Average villagers or townsfolk will be hostile to anyone they know to be descended from a demon or devil, and with good reason, although they might fear to do anything overtly aggressive toward such a character. The rare occasion when a fiend-blooded stands revealed as a descendant of fiends serves to reinforce common suspicions of sorcerers and other spontaneous arcane casters.

The fiend-blooded must endure the ignorance and prejudice of most humanoids, who assume that those descended from an Outer Planar being will be predisposed to think and behave like their ancestor. In the face of this attitude, the fiend-blooded feel compelled to conceal their true nature. The fiend-blooded often sympathize with half-elves and other persons of mixed heritage, particularly when those of mixed blood undergo abuse at the hands of the so-called pure-blooded members of other races. It is an ironic fact that the greatest enemies challenging a member of a fiend-blooded house are his fellow fiend-blooded, who stand to benefit directly from a rival's falling in disgrace.

FIEND-BLOODED HOUSES

A house is formed when a fiend-blooded discovers the identity of his fiendish ancestor and then successfully establishes contact with that fiend (or, less frequently, another fiend). He then pledges himself to that fiend, creating in effect a noble house whose patron is a denizen of the Outer Planes. Naturally, only a neutral or evil fiend-blooded would pledge loyalty to a fiend and thus found such a house.

Once a house is founded in mortal lands, it often grows to prominence through the aid of its patron fiend. The progeny of the original fiend-blooded founder become the next generation of fiend-blooded in that house, and so forth. Some houses have been in existence for centuries and are now among the wealthiest and most well known of merchant and noble houses in humanoid areas. Behind closed doors, the inner workings of a family of fiend-blooded are often sick and degenerate by human comparisons. Incest is common, and the Machiavellian intrigues between rival house members (especially in houses whose patron fiend is a devil) are intense beyond belief.

FIEND-BLOODED LORE

Characters with Knowledge (the planes) or bardic lore can research the fiend-blooded to learn more about them.

DC 10: Occasionally, fiends will come to the material plane and mate with humanoid partners.

DC 15: The sorcerously inclined descendants of such a union sometimes display fiendish qualities.

DC 20: The fiend-blooded are not fiends themselves, but mortals of great will who voluntarily explore their fiendish ancestry. In so doing, they can draw great power from it.

DC 30: Marquis Teresius Crattus is one of the most powerful cambions, and his house grows strong despite the sheer willfulness of his only daughter, Ariana, and her cohorts.

Any spellcaster who witnesses a fiend-blooded's smiting spell in action can attempt a DC 20 Spellcraft check to discern that the character is more than likely one of the mysterious fiend-blooded. Anyone who otherwise witnesses something fiendish about the fiend-blooded can attempt a DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) or DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check to gain the same knowledge.

FIEND-BLOODED IN THE GAME

Because they have no outward signifiers, it's easy to add fiend-blooded to an ongoing game: they've been there all along, hiding among the sorcerers and bards of the world.

This prestige class appeals to players who enjoy a rich backstory for their characters, or for whom a great part of the appeal of the sorcerer lies in the mysterious source of his power. If you have a fiend-blooded in your game, make sure he has the opportunity to experience both the ups and downs of the class. A player entering this prestige class is an invitation to the DM to work that character's fiendish ancestor into the game, whether directly or indirectly. Perhaps the character eventually meets his ancestor, or is even forced to destroy his own progenitor. Make sure to keep the threat of discovery ever present: Most humanoids will react poorly to the news that they have a fiend-blooded in their midst.

Adaptation

The fiend-blooded is designed for campaigns that feature Outer Planar creatures and their schemes. The class assumes a Material Plane default, where the presence of the fiendish must be kept secret, but campaigns set on other planes or in the City of Doors would change that default considerably. In such places, the fiend-blooded are much more commonplace and might even be able to live openly. In settings where fiends never visit the Material Plane, substitute some other powerful, otherworldly creature—or, better yet, find an exciting way to rationalize the existence of a mortal with a fiendish ancestor.

Sample Encounter

With their exploits, it would be a simple matter for the PCs to draw the attention of a local fiend-blooded house. The matriarch of the house could hire them to do in a rival fiend-blooded or otherwise manipulate them into advancing the house's agenda. Or the rival in question could set the PCs on a trail that leads to the local fiend-blooded house.

EL 8: Werner Stormhollow and two low-ranking house members (each a 3rd-level female human sorcerer with

maximum ranks in Bluff) are trying to hire the PCs to assassinate a rival named Setios. If they refuse, Werner has orders to silence them, which he will attempt to execute with glee.

Werner Stormhollow — CR 7

Male human sorcerer 6/fiend-blooded 1
LE Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal, empathic link

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 12
hp 32 (7 HD)
Immune *magic missiles* (*brooch of shielding*)
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee adamantine dagger +3 (1d4–1)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2
Combat Gear scroll of *fire shield*
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th):
3rd (5/day)—*hold person* (DC 17), *vampiric touch* (+2 melee touch)
2nd (7/day)—*detect thoughts* (DC 15), *ghoul touch* (+2 melee touch, DC 16), *Melf's acid arrow* (+4 ranged touch)
1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *disguise self, mage armor, magic missile, sleep* (DC 15)
0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+4 ranged touch), *daze* (DC 14), *detect magic, detect poison, mage hand, open/close, touch of fatigue* (+2 melee touch, DC 14)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16
SQ familiar, fiendish companion, fiendish heritage (+1 AC), share spells
Feats Awareness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Blood Calls to Blood*, Eschew Materials, Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (necromancy)
*New feat described on page 120
Skills Bluff +7, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +7, Intimidage +7, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +12
Possessions combat gear plus adamantine dagger, *brooch of shielding, ring of protection +1*

Fiendish Toad Familiar — CR —

LE Diminutive magical beast (augmented animal, lawful, evil, extraplanar)
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages empathic link, speak with master, speak with amphibians

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 18
hp 16 (7 HD); **DR** 5/magic
Resist cold 5, fire 5; improved evasion; **SR** 12
Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Speed 5 ft. (1 square)
Melee —
Space 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +4; **Grp** –14
Atk Options deliver touch spells, smite good 1/day (+4 attack, +7 damage)

Abilities Str 1, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 14, Cha 4
SQ amphibious
Feats Alertness
Skills Hide +13, Listen +4, Sense Motive +6, Spot +4

EL 12: Setios the fiend-blooded has discovered that his rivals seek to hire the PCs to kill him and has decided to strike proactively.

Setios — CR 12

Male half-elf sorcerer 6/fiend-blooded 6
CE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +7
Languages Common, Abyssal, Elven, Orc, empathic link

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Dodge
hp 42 (12 HD)
Immune *sleep* effects
Resist cold 5, fire 5; reduce damage from poison by 1
Fort +5 (+6 against poison), **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee scimitar +7 (1d6+1 plus poison/18–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7
Atk Options purple worm poison (DC 24, 1d6 Str/2d6 Str), smiting spell 1/day (+9 damage)
Combat Gear *cape of the mountebank*
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 12th):
6th (3/day)—*chain lightning* (DC 20), *cloak of hate** (DC 19)
5th (5/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 19), *oath of blood**, *telekinesis* (DC 18)
4th (6/day)—*dimension door, Evard's black tentacles, fire shield*
3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic, lightning bolt* (DC 17), *slow* (DC 16), *vampiric touch* (+7 melee touch)
2nd (7/day)—*detect thoughts* (DC 15), *ghoul touch* (+7 melee touch, DC 15), *invisibility, Melf's acid arrow* (+8 ranged touch), *protection from arrows*
1st (7/day)—*bestow wound** (DC 14), *burning hands* (DC 15), *disguise self, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (+8 ranged touch)
0 (6/day)—*acid splash* (+8 ranged touch), *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic, detect poison, mage hand, open/close, prestidigitation, resistance, touch of fatigue* (+7 melee touch, DC 13)
*New spell described later in this chapter.

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 16
SQ blood of fiends, fiendish companion, fiendish heritage, fiendish sorcery
Feats Awareness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Blood Calls to Blood*, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar), Spell Focus (evocation)
*New feat described on page 120.
Skills Appraise +5, Bluff +9, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +9, Hide +8, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Spellcraft +12, Spot +7
Possessions combat gear plus poisoned scimitar (purple worm poison), *amulet of health +2, periapt of wisdom +2, ring of protection +2*

Fiendish Raven Familiar — CR —

N Tiny magical beast (augmented animal, extraplanar)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +8
Languages empathic link, speak with master, speak with avians

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 18
hp 21 (12 HD); **DR** 10/magic
Resist cold 10, fire 10; improved evasion; **SR** 17
Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares), fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee claws +10 (1d2–5)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +6; **Grp** –7
Atk Options deliver touch spells, smite good 1/day (+10 attack, +12 damage)

Abilities Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 6
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Hide +16, Listen +3, Spot +8

PURIFIER OF THE HALLOWED DOCTRINE

"Though I walk in the midst of all that is unclean, though the shadow of evil falls over me, I shall not fear. For thou art with me, and thou shalt stand between me and harm."

—Brother Erland Buckley,
Disciple of the Hallowed Doctrine

The holy warriors and miracle-workers known as purifiers of the Hallowed Doctrine represent the primary line of defense between the spreading horror and malevolence that is taint and the innocent people—and possibly even gods themselves—who would suffer if it goes unchecked. Although no less devoted and faithful than the clerics and paladins from which most of them come, purifiers of the Hallowed Doctrine consider themselves servants not of gods but of the spiritual well-being of the world itself. They wield divine energies in ways nobody else can, and they stand stalwart against the greatest corruption and depravity that evil itself has to offer. Few followers of the Hallowed Doctrine live to old age—only those willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of those around them ever take up the purifier's mantle; many are the innocent lives and souls spared a horrible fate by the purifiers' efforts.

BECOMING A PURIFIER OF THE HALLOWED DOCTRINE

The path of the cleric is the most direct route toward becoming a purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine. The faith required of that class, the call to service, and the ability to channel positive energies all grant a purifier the tools needed to succeed in pursuing the Hallowed Doctrine. Paladins also step easily into the role of the purifier, although some find it difficult to narrow their focus from battling all varieties of evil to focusing primarily on taint and tainted creatures. Charisma (for the manipulation of positive energy and use with interpersonal skills) and Wisdom (for spell use and Will saves) are key abilities for purifiers. Constitution is also important for resisting corruption.

Entry Requirements

Alignment: Any good alignment or true neutral
Skills: Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks, Knowledge (religion) 8 ranks
Feats: Pure Soul*
Special: Ability to turn undead
*New feat described on page 124

Class Features

Purifiers of the Hallowed Doctrine gain spellcasting ability more slowly than do clerics, but they grow ever more potent at resisting and even nullifying taint, battling tainted creatures, and protecting those around them. They also gain lesser abilities against evil creatures in general.

Tainted Creatures: For purposes of your special abilities, a tainted creature includes any creature with a corruption or depravity score of 1 or more, any creature with a tainted feat, and any creature that has the ability to bestow corruption or depravity on another creature.

Spellcasting: At every odd-numbered level, you gain new spell levels and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class you belonged to before you added the prestige class. You do not, however, gain any other class benefit a character of that class would have gained. Determine spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly.

If you had more than one divine spellcasting class before you became a purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine, you must decide to which class to add each level of purifier for the purpose of determining spells per day.

Aura of Purity (Ex): You radiate an aura of holiness, making it difficult for you to hide your true nature. Tainted creatures need only succeed on a Spot check (DC 20 minus your purifier class level) to recognize you for what you are (or at least as a threat).

Detect Taint (Sp): At will, you can use *detect taint* (see page 128 for spell description).

Table 5–7: The Purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine Hit Die: d8

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Aura of purity, detect taint, turn undead	+1 level of existing divine class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Lay on hands	—
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Smite taint 1/day	+1 level of existing divine class
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Aura of sanctity +2	—
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Turn tainted	+1 level of existing divine class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Purify soul 1 pt/touch, smite taint 2/day	—
7th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Cleansing flame	+1 level of existing divine class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+6	Purify soul 2 pt/touch, shield of purity	—
9th	+6	+6	+3	+6	Smite taint 3/day	+1 level of existing divine class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+7	Aura of sanctity +4, purify soul 3 pt/touch	—

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Heal, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (the planes), Profession, and Spellcraft.

Turn Undead (Su): Your purifier class levels stack with any cleric or paladin levels you might have for purposes of turning undead.

Lay on Hands (Su): Starting at 2nd level, you can lay on hands as a paladin of your class level (see page 44 of the *Player's Handbook*). If you also have paladin levels, these levels stack.

Smite Taint (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, you can smite tainted creatures as a paladin smites evil (see page 44 of the *Player's Handbook*). If you have another smite ability, such as a paladin's ability to smite evil, you can choose as need dictates to use that power to smite taint instead of the power's original target.

You gain additional uses of this power at higher levels (2/day at 6th level and 3/day at 9th level).

Aura of Sanctity (Su): Starting at 4th level, all allies within 10 feet of you gain a +2 sacred bonus on saves made to resist acquiring taint.

This bonus rises to +4 when you reach 10th level.

Turn Tainted (Su): At 5th level, you can turn any tainted creature as though it were an undead equal to the creature's HD +4.

Purify Soul (Su): Beginning at 6th level, you can cure a living being of 1 point of corruption or depravity by touching that individual and spending a use of your turn undead ability. Unwilling creatures can attempt saving throws to resist: This is a Fortitude save if you are trying to cure them of corruption and a Will save if you are trying to cure them of depravity. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + your purifier class level + your Charisma modifier. This ability cannot remove so much corruption or depravity that it would move the target creature down to a lower taint category. Creatures who are innately tainted (that is, creatures whose monster entries in this or another book describe them as possessing corruption or depravity scores, tainted feats, or the ability to bestow taint) are unaffected.

At 8th level, your purifying touch improves and henceforward cures 2 points of corruption or depravity per touch; at 10th level this improves still further to cure 3 points per touch.

Cleansing Flame (Su): Starting at 7th level, three times per day you can cast any offensive spell against a tainted creature as though it were maximized (as per the metamagic feat), without preparing in advance to do so and without increasing the effective spell slot of the spell. The spell functions as maximized only against tainted creatures; against any other creature in its area it functions normally.

Shield of Purity (Su): At 8th level, you can surround yourself and your companions with a shield of holy energy. This effect covers up to a 10-foot radius around you. Any creature with even a single point of taint cannot enter this area, and all within gain a +6 sacred bonus on saves against spells or magical attacks made by tainted creatures from a distance. This effect requires you to spend a use of your turn undead ability to activate and lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

PLAYING A PURIFIER OF THE HALLOWED DOCTRINE

You have a holy purpose, a cause you pursue with religious zeal. Taint, and the evil it represents, is a cancer on the face of the world. It is your divine mandate to stamp it out. Even if you serve a specific deity, you do so in a very focused manner. You are a man (or woman) of the cloth and a warrior for purity. All evil should be fought, and all innocents helped—but if you must ever choose between battling back the tide of taint or thwarting any other sort of evil, you always choose taint as the greater threat. You will not throw your life away, but if you must sacrifice yourself to advance the cause you have embraced, you would do so without hesitation. Even given your mandate, however, your methods are steadfast: The ends do not justify the means, and using evil to battle taint is no more useful than using oil to douse a fire. You must yourself remain pure, for to be seduced into evil methods is the same as succumbing directly to taint.

All characters with this prestige class are affiliated with the Covenant of the Hallowed Doctrine, a religious organization that spans multiple churches of various good-aligned deities. The Hallowed Doctrine (dictated by Kardol Erzai, the first purifier, and now considered a true holy text) sets down the techniques of the purifier, establishes the code by which he or she must live and operate, and discusses the evils of taint. Many purifiers work directly for the Covenant, operating alongside other members (which include representatives of almost all character classes, not solely purifiers). These groups roam the kingdoms and wilderness, seeking out and expunging taint and tainted creatures.

Other purifiers of the Hallowed Doctrine work alone, or with unaffiliated adventurers, thwarting smaller evils most of the time but always on the lookout for signs of taint. Low-level purifiers are subject to the commands of the Covenant and might well be assigned to work with a specific group or in a particular region (as when, in a religious hierarchy, a bishop assigns a priest to a particular parish or church). As you gain both levels and esteem within the organization, you'll be left to your own judgment as to where you're needed most. Eventually, you could even be placed in charge of assigning other purifiers and members of the Covenant to specific tasks.

Combat

When engaged in combat with normal foes, your tactics are largely decided by the options made available by the class levels you had before becoming a purifier. Then again, given your mission statement, it's unlikely you'll be fighting normal foes all that often. Tainted creatures are extremely dangerous: Use your spells and, more important, your various supernatural abilities against taint to take them down hard and fast. When facing a tainted creature, don't worry about saving your smite or other limited-use abilities; if you don't destroy this foe, you'll never have to worry about reaching the next one, and you don't want to let even a single carrier of taint escape your justice. Several of your abilities, such as turn tainted, are effective at driving away tainted creatures. Use these if you must to protect yourself from certain harm, or if you feel you have a good chance

of actually reducing their level of taint. Don't use these abilities all the time, though, or you'll never have the opportunity to destroy these abominations. Given your combination of melee and spell abilities, your best bet is to use a few spells to bolster your defenses and weaken your foe from a distance, then move in and destroy it before it can regain its footing or escape.

Once you gain the ability to protect allies from taint, it's a good idea to coordinate with them as much as possible. Odds are good that any arcane companions of yours have better offensive spells than you do (at least until you gain cleansing flame), so you might wish to focus on protecting them and weakening the foe while they bombard it with damaging spells. Once you move in, coordinate with your fighter and paladin companions to take the foe down quickly; make certain, if you're facing multiple foes, that you convince your companions to concentrate on the tainted ones first. The others can only kill you, whereas your nemeses always carry the threat of infection.

At the class's highest levels, your ability to heal the taint of others provides a new batch of options against tainted creatures. Your group can close with the enemy much sooner, because the chance of your companions taking long-term taint is minimal. Your companions might also be more willing to battle tainted creatures, secure in the knowledge that you can reduce their taint so long as they don't gain too much at a time. By properly positioning your shield of purity, you can block multiple tainted creatures from reaching your companions, allowing them to focus on one at a time.

Illus. by D. Scott

Brother Erland Buckley, Purifier

Advancement

The Covenant of the Hallowed Doctrine has members in most good-aligned priesthoods who keep an eye out for young acolytes and warriors of pure heart and stalwart disposition. These recruiters attempt to include prospective members in dangerous tasks—although not beyond their abilities—to see how they react under pressure. When the candidate proves brave, determined, trustworthy, and untainted, the Covenant invites him to join.

Members receive continual instruction in martial skills and spellcasting (as appropriate), as well as in history, religion, the holy texts of the Hallowed Doctrine itself, and in the nature of evil and taint. Almost every moment you do not spend actively battling evil is devoted to study. Only those who, like you, show great ability and determination are taught the techniques of the purifier, and purifiers are accorded great respect within the organization. Low-ranking members are usually assigned simple tasks, such as scouting, carrying messages, or accompanying a more powerful member as part of his entourage. What little time you have to yourself is often devoted to the church from which you were originally drawn. Purifiers have little in the way of personal lives. You are expected to improve yourself constantly, and sloth and laziness are dismissible offenses.

As you advance through the ranks of the Covenant, and the levels of the purifier class, you'll want to keep your Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (religion) modifiers at peak levels—the first to maintain your knowledge of taint and its effects, the second to represent your studies of the Hallowed Doctrine. Take ranks in Diplomacy as well, the better to sway others to your way of thinking, or at least to convince them that you really do have their best interests at heart and that they should not hinder you in your pursuits. Magic items that boost your Wisdom and Charisma are invaluable if you can get them, with good armor and weapons falling a close second.

Resources

The primary resources of the Covenant are training and information. Without the Hallowed Doctrine, it's impossible to become a purifier. Further, the organization offers religious instruction and advice on battling taint. They have scouts constantly wandering, ever alert for any sign of spreading taint. A truly zealous purifier, burning to root out and destroy such evil, need merely petition the Covenant for a suitable location. The Covenant keeps track of more mundane forms of villainy as well, since such areas are particularly vulnerable to an outbreak of taint. So if you must enter the territory of a tyrannical king or wish to rid the region of a vampire while searching for taint, they might be able to give you pertinent advice.

The Covenant also provides backup. The organization is not huge—although widespread, it has relatively few members, given the duties and sacrifices required—so it often lacks the manpower to support its members as much as its leaders might like. Still, should you come across a region or creature of taint too powerful for you (or your party) to destroy alone, the Covenant might provide additional assistance.

Finally, the local archimandrite can provide a few magic items to Covenant members who require them. These are normally restricted to healing and restorative magic (such

as *potions of cure wounds* and *scrolls of restoration*), but also include certain protective devices (*rings of protection*) and the potent *rod of sanctity*, an item unique to the Covenant of the Hallowed Doctrine. The Covenant expects unused items to be returned, and expended or lost items to be paid back as the purifier has the means.

PURIFIERS OF THE HALLOWED DOCTRINE IN THE WORLD

"A purifier in my town terrifies me, because I know what his presence implies. But I don't find the idea nearly as terrifying as the thought of a purifier not *appearing in my town, should we need one."*

—Danaran Kall, priestess and paladin of Pelor

If taint plays a major part in your campaign or setting, the presence of a purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine is a boon to DM and player alike. His presence can enable the PCs to proceed farther into tainted regions than they otherwise might, and the purifier's focus on taint provides an easy, in-game hook to steer the campaign in that direction. Further, you can base stories around the reactions to the purifier's presence: Although most individuals recognize the necessity of the purifier's actions, the ignorant among the populace might actually blame the purifier for drawing taint to their doorstep.

Organization

The Covenant of the Hallowed Doctrine is made up of numerous local groups called monasteries, although many of them are based in temples or even private homes. Each Covenant monastery consists of anywhere from a single individual (in a small town) to a dozen souls (in only the largest monasteries in major cities). Most members have duties in various local temples or churches and devote themselves to those duties so long as they aren't actively engaged in Covenant activities.

The high priest (or priestess) of each monastery dictates the activities of those beneath him, supervises their training and studies, and essentially rules them just as any religious leader commands his flock. So long as he obeys the dictates of the Hallowed Doctrine, maintains his monastery's readiness to battle taint, and does not use his position to advance his own temple's agenda over those of his underlings, a high priest can run his monastery as he wishes. Most monasteries are named after fallen members of the Covenant, although some simply take the name of the town or community in which they are located.

In order to keep matters simple, and to avoid potential rivalries that might dilute the members' focus, the Covenant only recognizes three ranks. Acolytes are relatively new members to the Covenant; they are usually, but not always, of low- to mid-level. Disciples are proven members of the Covenant, having served with distinction for years or having completed many dangerous assignments; disciples tend to be mid- to high-level. Finally, the archimandrite is a leader in the Covenant, someone who has spent many decades in service and moved into an administrative position. Archimandrites are also of mid- to high-level.

The high priest of a given monastery is usually the highest-level local purifier, cleric, or paladin. In larger monasteries, the high priest always holds the rank of archimandrite; smaller monasteries might be led by a disciple. High priests have little time for personal

agendas; their lives are wholly devoted to supporting the Hallowed Doctrine and battling taint. Most high priests of the Covenant are people of faith and determination, not of ambition, since the position holds little temporal power. The high priest coordinates the information and activities of those who serve under him and remains in constant communication with other monasteries. It is ultimately his decision where to devote the resources and manpower of his monastery, and which threats should be dealt with first.

The archimandrites come down hard on any conflicts that arise within or between monasteries, for they know that inner turmoil can hamper the Covenant's ability to battle evil. They have adversaries enough outside the order, such as evil cults and priesthoods, some of which seek to spread taint, while others simply dislike the notion of a good-aligned religious organization becoming widespread. The Covenant also sometimes faces opposition from governments and even good-aligned temples that do not truly understand the nature of taint and see only a strange organization taking root in their backyard. Finally, rustic villagers who have no notion of taint at all find it easy to blame the purifiers for the strange happenings around their homes, not realizing the Covenant has actually come to help them.

NPC Reactions

Clerics, nobles, and others who understand what the Covenant represents usually have a starting attitude of friendly when dealing with purifiers; this might go as far as helpful in situations where the individual is aware of the specific threat that the purifier is attempting to thwart. Common folk tend to be friendly as well, as purifiers are usually clerics or paladins of good-aligned deities. Nobles and commoners of suspicious bent might be indifferent, and a few—those who secretly venerate evil deities or who believe the purifiers responsible for the evils they have come to destroy—are unfriendly or even hostile. Most nobles and priests will put on at least a show of courtesy, if only to avoid being perceived as rude to a member of the clergy.

Adventurers, or at least those who recognize the value of the purifier, are usually friendly. A fellow member of the Covenant is automatically helpful in all but the most bizarre of circumstances.

The chief enemies of the purifiers are followers of evil deities, and tainted creatures or those who have embraced taint. Purifiers run up against more mundane villains, but these are usually standard evildoers who oppose the purifier because he's in the way of their villainous schemes, not out of hatred for the purifier's calling.

PURIFIER OF THE HALLOWED DOCTRINE LORE

Characters with Knowledge (religion) can research the purifiers to learn more about them.

DC 10: Purifiers are members of a religious organization called the Covenant of the Hallowed Doctrine. They span many churches, priesthoods, and communities and are devoted to ridding the world of taint and similar evils. They organize themselves in groups called monasteries.

DC 15: The purifiers are reasonable spellcasters, but their most potent abilities are focused specifically against taint and tainted creatures. They're capable of driving off or destroying such creatures through sheer faith, and they can channel positive energy in ways other divine casters cannot.

DC 20: Purifiers are fanatical in their battle against taint. Although they can offer their companions protections nobody else can, they can also put those companions in danger due to their single-mindedness. You should never expect a purifier to compromise or bargain in the face of tainted creatures.

DC 30: At this level of success, characters can learn specific names and details of purifiers and Covenant members in your campaign, including histories and past exploits, as well as current duties and locations.

A DC 20 Gather Information, Knowledge (local), or bardic knowledge check will enable a character to locate a local member of the Covenant, should she need to contact one. If the character is actively seeking aid in thwarting a taint-based threat, and makes this fact known, she gains a +5 circumstance bonus to the check. The PC also gains this +5 circumstance bonus if she is herself a purifier or member of the Covenant. If both these things are true, the circumstance bonus is +8.

PURIFIERS OF THE HALLOWED DOCTRINE IN THE GAME

Since the Covenant is a small albeit widespread organization, and the purifiers have a specific focus, it's easy to introduce them into even a long-running campaign. So long as the PCs have had few run-ins with taint or tainted creatures, there's no reason for them to have ever before encountered a purifier.

Because of the purifiers' narrow focus, they can benefit campaigns that make heavy use of taint. Make certain to include enough tainted encounters for the purifier to remain useful; if a player picks up this prestige class in preparation for a major encounter but never again needs its abilities, he is not going to stick with it very long. Remember that the purifier might sometimes be the only reason the PCs survive unscathed in a tainted region; give him the occasional opportunity to shine by protecting his companions from tainted beasts or curing companions who might otherwise be lost to taint.

Adaptation

Purifiers are designed for taint-heavy campaign settings. If you'd like to use them in a campaign in which taint is not a factor, consider focusing their abilities against a specific form of evil entity instead. A category like outsiders or even fiends is probably too broad, given the intensely focused nature of this prestige class, but perhaps demons would be appropriate. The purifier's save bonuses, turning, and smite abilities would then apply to the supernatural and spell-like abilities of that specific creature type. This adaptation can be especially useful in a game that employs a particular kind of evil creature as its primary villain.

Sample Encounters

The PCs are most likely to encounter purifiers either when traveling near tainted regions or researching taint or other

great evils. An archimandrite might assign a purifier to keep an eye on a group of strange adventurers in taint-heavy regions, at least until she's certain they pose no threat. A powerful purifier might attempt to draft a heroic party to aid him in a particularly dangerous mission.

EL 8: Elsya of the Emerald Dale, two acolytes (human cleric 3), and her paladin's mount are investigating word of spreading taint near an isolated village. Elsya means well, but her high-handedness, combined with the local villain's wiliness in playing on his fellow villagers' distrust of strangers, have turned the villagers against her. She will attempt to recruit the PCs to help her but tries to remain in charge of the mission, insisting that they follow her orders.

Elsya of the Emerald Dale — CR 7

Female half-elf paladin 5/purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine 2
LG Medium humanoid (elf)
Init –1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2
Aura courage (10 ft., allies +4 against fear), good, purity (Spot DC 18)
Languages Common, Elven

AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20
hp 48 (7 HD)
Immune fear, *sleep* effects, disease
Resist +2 against enchantments
Fort +10, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee +*1 longsword* +9/+4 (1d8+3/19–20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8
Atk Options smite evil 2/day (+2 attack, +5 damage)
Special Actions lay on hands (14 hp), turn undead 5/day (+2, 2d6+6, 4th)
Combat Gear *ring of feather falling*
Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):
1st—*divine favor, lesser restoration*
Spell-Like Abilities:
At will—*detect evil, detect taint*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 14
SQ divine grace, special mount
Feats Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Pure Soul*
*New feat described on page 124
Skills Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Knowledge (religion) +7, Ride +3, Sense Motive +6
Possessions combat gear plus +*1 longsword, full plate* +*1*, heavy steel shield

EL 13: Erland Buckley is investigating the possibility that several of the city councillors of a great metropolis have been corrupted by taint or have joined a cult devoted to it. He might encounter the PCs as they battle one of the tainted monsters recently found infesting the city's sewers, or they could observe him battling the city watch after the corrupt councilors have declared him a criminal and a traitor.

Erland Buckley — CR 13

Male human cleric 6/purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine 7
NG Medium humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Aura sanctity (10 ft., allies gain +2 to resist taint)
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19
hp 71 (13 HD)
Immune taint
Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +13

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)
Melee masterwork shortspear +10/+5 (1d6) or
Melee *rod of sanctity* +13/+8 (1d6+4 plus 2d6) against taint
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +9
Atk Options cleansing flame 3/day (Maximize spell against tainted creatures), feat of strength 1/day, smite taint 2/day (+2 attack, +7 damage)
Special Actions lay on hands 14 points/day, spontaneous casting (*cure* spells), turn undead 9/day (+4, 2d6+14, 12th), greater turning 1/day, turn tainted
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 10th):
5th—*flame strike*[D] (DC 18), *raise dead, true seeing*
4th—*death ward, spell immunity*[D], *neutralize poison, restoration*
3rd—*daylight, dispel magic, remove disease, searing light*[D] (+10 ranged touch), *stone shape*
2nd—*consecrate, heat metal*[D] (DC 15), *resist energy, lesser restoration, silence* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon*
1st—*bless, comprehend languages, divine favor, endure elements*[D], *protection from evil, sanctuary* (DC 14)
0—*create water, detect magic, detect poison, light, purify food and drink, resistance*
D: domain spell. Domains: Strength, Sun
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):
at will—*detect taint*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14
SQ aura of good, aura of purity (Spot DC 13)
Feats Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Extra Turning, Pure Soul*, Spirit Sense*, Widen Spell
*New feats described later in this chapter
Skills Concentration +11, Diplomacy +12, Heal +8, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Spellcraft +14
Possessions masterwork shortspear, full plate, heavy steel shield, *rod of sanctity**
*New magic item described on page 133

TAINTED SCHOLAR

"Cost? Gold is a cost. Servitude is a cost. My soul is not a cost—or it's one I don't mind paying."
—Thavik of Donegan, a tainted scholar

Great secrets await those minds skilled enough to unearth them, and great secrets unlock great power. Let others speak in fearful whispers of secrets humanity was not meant to know. No secret is barred from a tainted scholar's grasp, and if such forbidden knowledge comes at the cost of his soul, he's willing to pay that price.

Becoming a Tainted Scholar

Any arcane spellcasting class provides relatively easy access to the path of the tainted scholar. Because they are more inclined toward scholarship than many other arcane spellcasters, dread necromancers and wizards (particularly specialist necromancers) are the most common tainted scholars, but sorcerers, wu jen, warmages, and even warlocks find their way into the class. The most significant requirement is having a moderate or greater amount of depravity, which the character might experience as a drawback until he acquires enough depravity to enter this class (at which point it helps rather than hinders him).

Entry Requirements

Skills: Concentration 8 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 4 ranks
Spellcasting: Ability to cast 1st-level arcane spells or use least invocations (warlock)
Taint: Moderate or greater depravity

Class Features

Like the loremaster class in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, your class features are built around uncovering secrets. Your secrets, however, relate to magical practices that many consider abhorrent—and indeed, your use of blood in your spellcasting is an abomination to most.

Spellcasting: At each level, you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in an arcane spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you belonged to more than one arcane spellcasting class before becoming a tainted scholar, you must choose to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Blood Component (Su): You can substitute a drop of your own blood for a spell's material component (if any), and in so doing increase the spell's power. The pinprick or minor knife cut to draw the requisite blood is a free action (just like using a material component) that becomes a normal part of casting the spell. Using this ability deals 1 point of damage to the tainted scholar but raises the spell's caster level by 1. Damage reduction, if you have any, doesn't apply to this damage.

If a spell has a costly material component (greater than 1 gp), you must still provide it but can use this ability to enhance the spell if you desire. You can similarly enhance a spell that has no material component.

Level Advancement: The power of taint is seductive. Once you have tasted its attractions, it is hard to resist. If you wish to advance a level in another class after taking your first level as a tainted scholar, you must succeed on a Will save (DC = 10 + your depravity score). If you fail, you must stay in this prestige class and advance another level in tainted scholar instead. If you succeed, you can advance the level in another class, although you must still attempt the saving throw the next time you gain a level or default back to this prestige class.

Illus. by W. England

Thavik of Donegan, tainted scholar

Once you reach 10th level as a tainted scholar, you can freely advance in other classes.

Tainted Spellcasting (Su): Rather than using a key ability score for spellcasting, you use your corruption and depravity scores. To cast a spell, you must have a depravity score at least equal to the spell's level. Your bonus spells are based on a number equal to your depravity score + 10, and saving throws against your spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + 1/2 your corruption score. For example, a tainted scholar with a depravity score of 3 would gain bonus spells as a wizard with an Intelligence score of 13 or a sorcerer with a Charisma score of 13.

You accumulate taint for casting your spells. Each time you cast an arcane spell, you must make a Will save (DC 10 + spell level) or increase your depravity score by 1. All arcane spells you cast are evil spells.

Taint Suppression: You are likely to accumulate high corruption and depravity scores, but this taint is not immediately obvious to onlookers. Your depravity manifests in the normal range of mental symptoms, but you can replace any physical symptom of corruption with the internal corruption symptom. If you enter a tainted area, your corruption immediately manifests externally again, and you regain the physical symptoms you exchanged for internal corruption, if any. These physical symptoms disappear again 1d4 days after you leave a tainted area. Otherwise, it is impossible to tell from external appearance that you carry corruption.

Secret: In your studies, you unearth all sorts of useful forbidden knowledge. At 2nd level, and again at 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, choose a secret from the table below. Your class level plus your depravity score determines which secrets you can choose: The table shows the minimum requirement for each secret. You can't choose the same secret twice. The details of each secret are given after the table.

Tainted Scholar Secrets

Min. Level + Depravity	Secret
1	Blooded metamagic
2	Stanch
3	Death knell
4	Clarity of true madness
5	Wholesome corruption
6	Bloodseeking spell
7	Thicker than water
8	Tainted knowledge
9	Forbidden arcana
10	Greater forbidden arcana

Blooded Metamagic: This secret allows you to apply a metamagic feat you know to a spell you cast by paying an additional cost in blood. By draining your own blood, you can enhance your spells without using a higher-level spell slot. The cost is a number of points of Constitution damage equal to the spell slot adjustment of the metamagic feat. Thus, casting an empowered *vampiric touch* spell costs you 2 points of Constitution damage, because an empowered spell uses up a spell slot two levels higher than normal. You cannot enhance a spell to a level higher than you can cast. For example, you must be at least a 9th-level caster to cast an empowered *vampiric touch* spell (or at least 10th-level, if you are casting as a sorcerer), since the empowered spell would require a 5th-level spell slot.

If you do not have a Constitution score, you cannot use this ability.

Stanch (Ex): This secret allows you to become stable automatically when your hit points drop below 0. You still die if you reach –10 hit points or below.

Death Knell (Sp): This secret grants you the ability to use *death knell* once per day as a spell-like ability (see page 217 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Clarity of True Madness (Su): Once per day, this secret allows you to add your depravity score as a bonus on one Wisdom-based skill check or Will save. You must choose to use this benefit before the check or save is rolled.

Wholesome Corruption (Su): Once per day, this secret allows you to add your corruption score as a bonus on one Concentration check or Fortitude save. You must choose to use this benefit before the check or save is rolled.

Bloodseeking Spell (Su): This secret grants you the ability to imbue your spells with the ability to draw blood from their targets. To use this ability, you must inflict a minor wound on yourself; this is a free action that deals 3 points of damage to you and becomes a normal part of casting the spell. Damage reduction, if you have any, doesn't apply to this damage.

A bloodseeking spell deals an extra 1d6 points of damage to each target that takes damage from the spell. You can't apply this ability to any spell that doesn't deal damage. This extra damage applies only to spells that deal hit point damage, not to spells that deal ability damage, ability drain, or other kinds of damage. Constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, undead, and any creatures without blood or a similar substance within their bodies are immune.

Thicker Than Water (Su): This secret grants you partial conscious control over your own vital fluids. When you are injured, your blood withdraws from the wound, preventing some damage. This effect gives you damage reduction 1/piercing and slashing.

Tainted Knowledge: This secret grants you a bonus tainted feat, chosen from the list of tainted feats on page 121.

Forbidden Arcana: This secret grants you the ability to use one additional 1st-level spell per day, as if gained through having a high ability or depravity score.

Greater Forbidden Arcana: This secret grants you the ability to use one additional 2nd-level spell per day, as if gained through having a high ability or depravity score.

Lore: Tainted scholars gather knowledge. At 3rd level, you gain the ability to know legends or information regarding various topics, just as a bard can with bardic knowledge. You add your tainted scholar class level and your Intelligence modifier to this lore check. You can add your depravity score instead of your Intelligence modifier to any lore check dealing with supernatural, horrific, tainted, or otherwise forbidden subjects, at the DM's discretion. See page 28 of the *Player's Handbook* for more information on bardic knowledge.

Outré Lore (Sp): Beginning at 5th level, your knowledge of lore beyond the realm of common experience is broadened and magically augmented. Once per day, you can use *contact other plane* (see pages 212–213 of the *Player's Handbook*) as a spell-like ability. If your Intelligence and Charisma temporarily decrease as a result of using this ability, you must make a Will save or have your depravity score increased by 1. The DC for this Will save equals the DC of the Intelligence check to avoid the ability score decrease +10. Thus, if you contact an Elemental Plane (spell DC 7), the DC is 17; if you contact a greater deity on an Outer Plane (spell DC 16), the DC is 26.

Aberrant Lore: At 7th level, you gain an innate understanding of objects, places, and creatures that carry the taint of evil. By concentrating as a full-round action and focusing your attention on a creature, object, or specific site within 60 feet of you, you can determine if it carries or transmits taint.

In the case of a creature, you can determine the strength of its higher taint score (corruption or depravity): mild, moderate, or severe (see pages 62–66).

Table 5–8: The Tainted Scholar **Hit Die: d6**

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spellcasting
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Blood component, level advancement, tainted spellcasting, taint suppression	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Secret	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Lore	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Secret	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Outré lore	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Secret	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Aberrant lore	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Secret	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Heretical lore	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Secret	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class

Class Skills (2 + Int modifier per level): Concentration, Craft, Decipher Script, Intimidate, Knowledge (all skills, taken individually), and Spellcraft.

In the case of an object, by spending a full hour examining it you can determine its magic properties as if you had cast an *identify* spell on it (see page 243 of the *Player's Handbook*).

In the case of a location, you can determine its magical properties, if it has any, in the same way as with an object. If it has no magical properties but is tainted by some horrific event in the past, you receive a vision of the event. Examining a location requires you to spend 1 hour in the location.

Heretical Lore: Beginning at 9th level, you gain contacts among the evil creatures of the planes. These beings can rescue you from extreme situations or otherwise grant your wishes. As often as once per day, you can call upon these entities to grant you a *limited wish* (see page 248 of the *Player's Handbook*), with no XP cost attached. However, using this ability increases your corruption and depravity scores by 1d3 points each, and results in the imposition of a *geas/quest* (see page 234 of the *Player's Handbook*) that requires you to perform some evil act in repayment for the favor.

PLAYING A TAINTED SCHOLAR

Your years of delving into dark and forbidden secrets have taken a toll on your mental well-being. You are more than a little insane. You pay scant heed to the whispers in the back of your mind, the threatening nightmares, or the things you see that others don't seem to notice—these are simply occupational hazards. So what if a full-blown hallucination unfolds before your unseeing eyes as you contemplate the passage you have just read in Kazerabet's *Art of Necromancy,* muttering snippets from its dark lore under your breath? The power and knowledge you seek is worth any price.

Combat

Spellcasting remains your greatest strength, and progresses at its full rate as you advance. Thus, your place in combat is not likely to change much—if you are like most wizards, you will hang back from melee in order to blast opponents with the most debilitating necromantic spells you can manage. Several of the secrets available to you enhance your spellcasting ability, including a number of ways (through blooded metamagic or bloodseeking spells) to make your spells simply deal more damage—always good in a straightforward fight against a physically powerful foe.

One of the best ways to improve your chances in combat involves actions you can take before combat begins. You have a variety of ways, from common spells to your outré lore at medium levels, to gain information that might influence the outcome of a battle.

At the highest levels of this class, your access to heretical lore might save your entire party from a desperate situation, in the form of a *limited wish* through your dark contacts.

Advancement

Tainted scholars come from a variety of backgrounds. Many are inexperienced spellcasters who stumble across or seek out the forbidden secrets of magic in libraries or ancient crypts. Others are little more than hedge wizards who learn sinister secrets from an aging mentor or a darker, otherworldly force. What they all have in common is a fascination with the interweaving of magic, life, death, blood, knowledge, and power—a delicate balance, an intricate dance. With that fascination comes a lust for more knowledge, a lust that quickly overpowers any concerns about morality, safety, or sanity.

As a tainted scholar, you spend much of your time seeking out ancient scrolls containing forbidden secrets, lost tombs with esoteric inscriptions, undead wizards and the vanished arts they might yet preserve, and other sources of arcane mysteries. Between adventures, you pore over the lore you have uncovered, opening your mind to its incomprehensible secrets and bending your thoughts to navigate its warped logic. Your fragile sanity falls casualty to this exploration, and your soul slowly disintegrates under depravity's rasp, but you give no consideration to the price you pay for your knowledge and all the power that comes with it.

As you advance, you have frequent opportunities to choose the secrets you will pursue and the powers you will unlock as a result. The secrets you choose depend on your interests and desires. If you enjoy using metamagic and know a handful of metamagic feats, blooded metamagic enables you to use those feats without expending precious higher-level spell slots. Bloodseeking spell makes your spells more dangerous, and forbidden arcana secrets give you more spellcasting power—always a boon. You can combine forbidden arcana with blooded metamagic to wring every drop from these additional low-level spells. If you find yourself too often paying the price for your high taint scores, clarity of true madness and wholesome corruption can turn a handicap into an advantage. If you're something of a scrapper, you might instead consider secrets that enhance melee fighting, such as stanch, death knell, and thicker than water.

Resources

The one resource you covet above others is knowledge. If you have other tainted scholars in your acquaintance—or even other wizards, dread necromancers, or similar characters whose interests run in the same vein—the exchange of knowledge can be highly profitable for all of you. There is no structured organization of tainted scholars, and you might feel competitive animosity toward others who hoard their knowledge and keep their secrets from your grasp. If you can overcome this emotional reaction, you'll find sharing spells, tomes of forbidden lore, and clues to the locations of ancient secrets a worthwhile enterprise. Besides, keeping in touch with your peers puts you in a good position to seize their effects (and possibly some dark knowledge) should some sad fate befall them.

TAINTED SCHOLARS IN THE WORLD

"His books should be torched, his tower toppled, and as for the man himself—well, I think Thavik of Donegan should be burned at the stake."

—Brother Erland Buckley,
Disciple of the Hallowed Doctrine

The tainted scholar is an example of a classic archetype in horror fantasy—the wizard who delves too deeply into

forbidden lore. The class builds on the idea that some knowledge is beyond mortal ability to comprehend, along with the concept that power is a corrupting influence on the human soul.

Organization

There is no general organization of tainted scholars. Secret cabals exist where like-minded scholars come together to share their explorations into forbidden lore, but these are small, egalitarian organizations with little structure. One feature shared by all such cabals is a strict requirement of secrecy, with violations punished by painful, grisly death.

Cabals of tainted scholars are true communities of equals. If the knowledge of one member exceeds that of the others, he has little or nothing to gain from the association and usually leaves it (often traveling far away to avoid any possible repercussions of his departure). The scholar with the strongest personality often adopts some kind of leadership role, but this amounts simply to setting a time and possibly declaring a topic for the next gathering of the cabal. In a community of depraved, often paranoid, power-mad spellcasters, leadership is best handled with a very light touch.

NPC Reactions

Even if their calling is not obvious—and few tainted scholars wear their profession on their sleeves—tainted scholars are typically greeted with nervousness, dislike, or outright disgust. Their corruption might be invisible, but their depravity has manifestations that are often abundantly clear even to casual acquaintances. As a result, most NPCs have an initial reaction of unfriendly when encountering a tainted scholar, even if they can't put a finger on the reason for their dislike.

Champions of good are natural enemies of tainted scholars, and this applies particularly to those groups of wizards who seek to promote the use of magic for good in the world.

TAINTED SCHOLAR LORE

Characters with Knowledge (arcana) can research tainted scholars to learn more about them.

DC 10: Some wizards and other spellcasters are obsessed with uncovering secrets that mortal minds were not meant to know—to their ultimate ruin.

DC 15: Tainted scholars practice an ancient and evil form of magic that uses blood as a component. In their obsessive drive to uncover secrets and mysteries of magic, they destroy their own souls to gain greater power.

DC 20: These scholars embrace the taint of evil and use it to power their spells. They learn secrets that improve their spellcasting, toughen their bodies, and grant them unearthly knowledge.

DC 30: A success at this DC grants information about the activities of a local cabal of tainted scholars or a prominent individual scholar.

TAINTED SCHOLARS IN THE GAME

Tainted scholars work well as solitary villains in a horror game or as part of a mysterious evil cabal unleashing horrors upon an unwary world. True to the theme of many horror stories, a tainted scholar villain might, like Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's novel, have no idea that the knowledge he

is exploring and putting to use could have unintended and disastrous consequences. As with the corrupt avenger, a lone tainted scholar could be an interesting way to introduce your players to the taint mechanics.

Adaptation

The tainted scholar presented here is an adaptation of a class that has appeared in two earlier versions. The maho-tsukai prestige class in *Oriental Adventures* was part of the first exploration of the taint mechanics in D&D, and that class was revised and adapted for a more general D&D campaign in *Unearthed Arcana*. Comparing these different implementations of the same general concept is an interesting study in adapting a class to different settings and even genres of play. The tainted scholar is intentionally built like the loremaster class, as a way of highlighting the horror-genre role of a scholar who explores secrets too horrible for the human mind to grasp.

Sample Encounters

Tainted scholars are often encountered alone, but sometimes in cabals. More powerful individuals acquire minions of various unsavory sorts to do their bidding. Adventures involving a tainted scholar typically revolve around themes of ancient horrors unwittingly unleashed upon the world, or power-hungry scholars breaking into libraries, tombs, or museums to steal scrolls, tomes, or artifacts.

EL 7–12: These low-level tainted scholars could be encountered individually (EL 7) or in a cabal with up to about 6 members (EL 12).

Tainted Cabalist — CR 7

Human wizard 5/tainted scholar 2
NE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Abyssal, Draconic, Infernal, empathic link

AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 12
hp 28 (7 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** –1, **Will** +9
Weakness mild phobia (cramped quarters), winded (staggered on third and any subsequent rounds of any combat)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee quarterstaff +2 (1d6–1)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +2
Atk Options blood component (1 hp for +1 CL), blooded metamagic (spontaneously use Con instead of extra spell levels), Debilitating Spell 2/day (spell becomes evil, deals extra 2 Con or 4 Wis damage to one target), Surge of Malevolence 1/day (+6 to one attack roll, save, or check), Empower Spell, Maximize Spell, Still Spell
Combat Gear *wand of magic missiles* (CL 3rd, 50 charges)
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 7th):
4th—*dimension door, phantasmal killer* (DC 16)
3rd—*dispel magic, fireball* (DC 16), *lightning bolt* (DC 16)
2nd—*alter self, blur, invisibility, scorching ray* (+3 ranged touch), *touch of idiocy* (+2 melee touch, DC 15)
1st—*cause fear* (DC 14), *expeditious retreat, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (+3 ranged touch)
0—*acid splash* (+3 ranged touch), *detect magic, disrupt undead* (+3 ranged touch), *touch of fatigue* (+2 melee touch, DC 13)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 12
Corruption 7 (moderate), **Depravity** 8 (moderate)
SQ corruption symptoms (winded, joint pain), depravity symptoms (mild phobia [cramped quarters], distracted), familiar, share spells
Feats Awareness[B] (if familiar within 5 ft.), Debilitating Spell*, Empower Spell, Maximize Spell[B], Scribe Scroll[B], Still Spell, Surge of Malevolence*
*New feat described later in this chapter
Skills Concentration +10, Decipher Script +5, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (history) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen –1, Spellcraft +13, Spot –1
Possessions combat gear plus *amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1*

Viper Familiar — CR —

N Tiny magical beast (augmented animal)
Init +3; **Senses** scent; Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages empathic link, speak with master

AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17
hp 41 (15 HD)
Resist improved evasion
Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

Speed 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.
Melee bite +8 (1 plus poison)
Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** –8
Atk Options deliver touch spells, poison (DC 10, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con)

Abilities Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 2
Feats Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +11, Climb +11, Concentration +11, Hide +15, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +6

EL 16: Thavik of Donegan is a dread necromancer who has advanced far along the path of the tainted scholar. His particular fascination, true to his original class, is the art of necromancy and the creation of undead.

Thavik of Donegan — CR 16

Male githyanki dread necromancer 5/tainted scholar 10
CE Medium humanoid (extraplanar)
Init –5; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
Aura fear (5 ft., Will DC 18 or shaken)
Languages Githyanki, Common, Draconic

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 22
hp 82 (15 HD); **DR** 1/piercing and slashing, 2/bludgeoning and magic
Resist +2 on saves against *sleep,* stun, paralysis, poison, disease; **SR** 20
Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +11
Weakness light blindness, mild phobia (oozes and vermin), palsy (–2 penalty on ranged attacks)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee charnel touch +7 (1d8+1)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +7
Atk Options blood component (1 hp for +1 CL), blooded metamagic (spontaneously use Con instead of extra spell levels), bloodseeking spell (3 hp for +1d6 damage), Debilitating Spell 4/day (spell becomes evil, deals extra 2 Con or 4 Wis damage to one target), Surge of Malevolence 1/day (+9 to one attack roll, save, or check), Empower Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell

Special Actions negative energy burst 1/day (5d4 damage, Will DC 18 half), rebuke undead 9/day (+8, 2d6+11, 5th)
Dread Necromancer Spells Thavik can cast all the 1st- (9/day), 2nd- (8/day), 3rd- (7/day), 4th- (7/day), 5th- (7/day), 6th- (7/day), and 7th- (4/day) level spells listed on page 87, plus *death watch* (as a 2nd-level spell)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th, 1d20+15 to overcome SR):
3/day—*blur, daze* (DC 16), *dimension door, mage hand, telekinesis* (DC 21)
1/day—*contact other plane* (outré lore), *limited wish* (heretical lore), *plane shift* (DC 23)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 22
Corruption 33 (severe), **Depravity** 29 (severe)
SQ lore (+12, +39 for forbidden subjects), aberrant lore, identify taint, stanch (automatically stabilize below 0 hp), forbidden arcana (bonus 1st-level spell), corruption symptoms (palsy, paralyzed face, lich eyes), depravity symptoms (mild phobia [oozes and vermin], hallucinating, paranoid)
Feats Debilitating Spell*, Empower Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Spell Penetration, Surge of Malevolence*
*New feats described in Chapter 5.
Skills Bluff +15, Concentration +21, Decipher Script +20, Diplomacy +7, Hide +5, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7
Possessions *amulet of natural armor +3, bracers of armor +6, cloak of Charisma +4, gloves of Dexterity +2, pink rhomboid ioun stone, ring of protection +3*

New Feats

In a horror-oriented campaign, feat selection is a vital part of establishing the mood of the experience. Feats designed to ward off the effects of taint can prove more valuable than those intended to deal a bit of extra damage, and feats that help fuel the evil magic and horrific powers that crop up in horror stories could suit monsters, villains, or even evil-leaning PCs. The feats presented in this section provide new options for characters of all classes, although some might be more suited to villains and NPCs than to those who would claim a hero's mantle.

TAINTED FEATS

Tainted feats can only be taken by those who have taint, as described in Chapter 4. Certain feats require more taint than others, or a specific type of taint (corruption or depravity). Anyone with a tainted feat who reduces his taint score to below the feat's prerequisites loses access to the feat. He does not, however, lose the feat itself; he has no empty slot to fill with something else, and he instantly regains use of the feat should he once more raise his taint score to the appropriate level.

These feats represent a manifestation of the fundamental corruption in both body and soul of the character who possesses them. Those who use these feats are literally drawing upon the mystical malevolence growing within like a cancer, an attitude that is not conducive to efforts to cleanse themselves of the taint.

A character who makes use of a tainted feat appears as evil to all alignment-detecting spells and abilities for 2d4 rounds thereafter, even if he is not of evil alignment. During this period, he is also subject to abilities that normally function only against evil beings, such as *magic circle against evil* or a paladin's smite evil ability. Tainted feats are supernatural abilities (though they do not require any extra time to use, unless stated otherwise in their individual descriptions) and do not function within the area of an *antimagic field*.

VILE FEATS

Some of the feats presented in this book are vile feats. First introduced in *Book of Vile Darkness*, feats with the vile feats are available only to intelligent creatures of evil alignment.

This chapter contains a new subset of vile feats known as deformity feats. Deformity feats represent an intentional act of will by a character, changing him in some horrific way. The prerequisite feat for every other deformity feat is a feat called Willing Deformity; the version presented here updates and supersedes the one introduced in *Book of Vile Darkness*.

FEAT DESCRIPTIONS

The following feats either enable heroic characters to resist taint and battle the forces of darkness, or provide tainted characters with new means of benefiting from their corruption and depravity.

ARCHIVIST OF NATURE

In addition to your studies of the darkness, you have spent time studying giants and fey.

Prerequisite: Dark knowledge.

Benefit: You can use your dark knowledge on giants and fey. You use Knowledge (nature) for dark knowledge checks regarding these two creature types.

Normal: Without this feat, a character with dark knowledge can only use that class feature on aberrations, elementals, magical beasts, outsiders, and undead.

BANE MAGIC

Your spells deal extra damage to a particular type of creature.

Benefit: When you cast a spell that deals damage against a specific creature type, you deal an extra 2d6 points of damage. For example, a giant bane *lightning bolt* cast by an 8th-level caster would deal the usual 8d6 points of damage to any nongiant in its path but would deal 10d6 points of damage against giants. This feat has no effect on spells that do not deal hit point damage, and the source and type of the damage remains the same. This feat cannot be used to increase the amount of healing dealt to undead by *inflict light wounds* and similar spells, but it can add to the damage dealt by casting *cure light wounds* on an undead creature.

Special: You can take this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, you must apply its effects to a different type of creature: aberrations, animals, constructs, dragons, elementals, fey, giants, humanoids, magical beasts, monstrous humanoids, oozes, outsiders, plants, undead, or vermin. If you choose humanoids, you must select a particular type of humanoid, such as dwarf or orc.

An aberration-specific version of this feat first appeared in *Lords of Madness: The Book of Aberrations*.

Table 5–9: New Feats

General Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Archivist of Nature	Dark knowledge class feature	Dark knowledge works on giants and fey
Bane Magic	—	Spells deal 2d6 extra damage to specific creature type
Blood Calls to Blood	Spontaneous arcane caster, fiend ancestor	+2 save bonus against attacks from fiends
Corrupt Spell Focus	Nongood alignment	+1 to save DC for all corrupt spells you cast
Greater Corrupt Spell Focus	Corrupt Spell Focus, nongood alignment	+2 to save DC for all corrupt spells you cast
Disease Immunity	Constitution 13	Immune to one disease, +2 bonus on saves against contracting all other diseases
Draconic Archivist	Dark knowledge class feature	Dark knowledge works on constructs and dragons
Dreamtelling	—	Interpret the symbolism of a dream
Oneiromancy	Dreamtelling, spellcaster	Avoid casting mishaps in nightmare realms, gain Spell Focus (enchantment and illusion) in dreamscape, spells cast at dream selves deal nonlethal damage
Improved Oneiromancy	Oneiromancy, Dreamtelling, spellcaster	Gain access to new dream-related spells
Font of Life	Living creature	Gain an extra save to avoid energy drain
Haunting Melody	Bardic music class feature, Perform 9 ranks	Bardic music inspires fear
Master of Knowledge	—	+1 bonus on Knowledge skill checks
Pure Soul	Non-evil alignment, no taint	Gain immunity to taint
Spirit Sense	Wis 12, near-death experience	See and speak with the recently dead
Unnatural Will	Cha 12, Iron Will	Add Cha modifier to Will saves against fear effects

Blood Calls to Blood

Exploring the latent potential in your blood due to your fiendish descent, you learn how to better adapt to the mystical attacks of your forebears.

Prerequisites: Spontaneous arcane caster, must be descended from a fiend.

Benefit: Against the attacks, spells, and spell-like abilities of fiends (evil outsiders) and half-fiends, you gain a +2 bonus on your saving throws. This bonus does not apply against the assaults of opponents of any other kind.

Corrupt Arcana [Tainted]

You can prepare and cast corrupt spells.

Prerequisites: Spontaneous arcane or divine caster, mild depravity.

Benefit: If you have access to a corrupt spell in written form—on a scroll, in a spellbook, or in a tome of forbidden lore—you can prepare it in the same way that a wizard or cleric would. The prepared corrupt spell remains in your mind and occupies one of your daily spell slots until you cast it or change it. A prepared corrupt spell uses a spell slot of the spell's normal level, and you must pay corruption costs as normal for casting the spell.

Any corrupt spells you prepare by using this feat do not count against your total spells known, just your spells per day.

Corrupt Spell Focus

All spells you cast that have a corrupt component (such as *call forth the beast**, *master's lament**, or *chain of sorrow**) are more potent than normal.

*New spells described later in this chapter.

Prerequisite: Any nongood alignment.

Benefit: You add +1 to the DC for all saving throws against any spells you cast that have a corrupt component.

Debilitating Spell [Tainted]

By calling upon the taint within, you add a malign power to your offensive spells.

Prerequisites: Surge of Malevolence, moderate taint.

Benefit: This feat adds the evil descriptor to a spell. Furthermore, if the spell deals any physical damage to a subject, the target also takes either 2 points of Constitution damage (if your corruption is higher than your depravity) or 4 points of Wisdom damage (if your depravity is higher than your corruption). If you have an equal level of corruption and depravity, choose which sort of damage you wish to deal. The spell deals this ability damage only to a single target, even if the spell itself affects an area or more than one subject (in which case, you choose the target affected by your taint).

You can use this ability twice per day if you have moderate taint and four times per day if you have severe taint.

Special: You must declare whether you are using this feat before casting the spell. If you use this feat on a creature immune to the ability damage, that daily use of the feat is still expended.

You cannot combine this feat with Debilitating Strike on a single attack (for example, with a touch attack spell). If you have both feats, you must elect to use one or the other on a given attack.

Debilitating Strike [Tainted]

By calling upon the taint within, you add a malign power to your melee attacks.

Prerequisites: Surge of Malevolence, moderate taint.

Benefit: This feat makes your unarmed or melee attacks evil for purposes of overcoming damage reduction. Furthermore, if you successfully attack and deal physical damage to a creature, the target also takes either 2 points of Constitution damage (if your corruption is higher than your

Monstrous Feats	Prerequisites	Benefit
Touch of Taint	Natural attack dealing ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain	Deal taint to target

Tainted Feats*	Prerequisites	Benefit
Corrupt Arcana	Spontaneous caster, mild depravity	Prepare corrupt spell not among your spells known
Eldritch Corruption	Metamagic feat, moderate depravity	Enlarge, extend, heighten, or widen a spell at the cost of your ally's Con damage
Forbidden Lore	Bardic knowledge or lore class feature, mild depravity	+2, +4, or +6 bonus on bardic knowledge or lore checks regarding sinister topics
Lunatic Insight	Mild depravity	+2 initiative bonus, treat all Knowledge skills as if they were trained skills
Mad Faith	Divine spellcaster, mild depravity	Your depravity grants you bonus spells
Surge of Malevolence	Mild taint	+3, +6, or +9 bonus on a single attack, save, or check
Debilitating Spell	Surge of Malevolence, moderate taint	Spells become evil, deal Con or Wis damage
Debilitating Strike	Surge of Malevolence, moderate taint	Melee attacks become evil, deal Con or Wis damage
Tainted Fury	Con 13, moderate corruption	Gain bonus hit points and a tainted smite attack while in a tainted fury

*Only nongood creatures suffering from taint can acquire tainted feats.

Vile Feats*	Prerequisites	Benefit
Willing Deformity	Evil alignment	+3 bonus on Intimidate checks
Deformity (Skin)	Evil alignment, Willing Deformity	+1 natural armor bonus
Deformity (Tall)	Evil alignment, Willing Deformity, Medium size	Gain reach as if Large, take –1 penalty to AC
Deformity (Teeth)	Evil alignment, Willing Deformity	Gain bite attack, +1 bonus on Intimidate checks
Deformity (Tongue)	Evil alignment, Willing Deformity	Gain blindsense 30 ft.

*Only intelligent creatures of evil alignment can acquire vile feats.

depravity) or 4 points of Wisdom damage (if your depravity is higher than your corruption). If you have an equal level of corruption and depravity, choose which sort of damage you wish to deal.

You can use this ability twice per day if you have moderate taint and four times per day if you have severe taint.

Special: You must declare whether you are using this feat before making your attack. If you use this feat on a creature immune to the ability damage, that daily use of the feat is still expended.

You cannot combine this feat with Debilitating Spell on a single attack (for example, with a touch attack spell). If you have both feats, you must elect to use one or the other on a given attack.

Deformity (Skin) [Vile]

Due to a regimen of deliberate abuse, you have roughened your skin until it has grown as coarse and tough as rhino hide.

Prerequisites: Evil alignment, Willing Deformity.

Benefit: You gain a +1 natural armor bonus.

Special: You can take this feat more than once. Its effects stack.

Deformity (Tall) [Vile]

Through long and painful stints on the rack, bolstered by the surgical implantation of various splints and struts, you have stretched yourself to well over 7 feet in height.

Prerequisites: Evil alignment, Willing Deformity, Medium size.

Benefit: Even though you are still technically a Medium creature, your improved height and lanky limbs grant you an additional 5 feet to your reach, thereby allowing you to strike nonadjacent squares with nonreach weapons.

Special: You are a larger and clumsier target than you were before undergoing the height extension, giving you –1 to your AC. You also take a –2 penalty on Hide checks.

Deformity (Teeth) [Vile]

By filing your teeth to points and brutalizing your gums, you gain a hideous smile full of razor-sharp teeth that enable you to make a grisly bite attack.

Prerequisites: Evil alignment, Willing Deformity.

Benefit: You gain a bite attack that can be used as a natural weapon to deal damage equal to 1d4 + your Strength modifier. If you attack with other weapons, you can use your bite as a secondary attack (taking a –5 penalty on your attack roll) for 1d4 + half Strength modifier damage. In addition, you gain a +1 bonus on Intimidate checks.

Deformity (Tongue) [Vile]

Through protracted self-mutilation that involves frequently piercing your tongue and dipping it in acid, your tongue becomes hideous to behold but oddly sensitive to the environment.

Prerequisites: Evil alignment, Willing Deformity.

Benefit: You gain the ability to sense your surroundings by taste, much as a serpent can. You gain the blindsense ability out to a range of 30 feet.

Disease Immunity

Whether due to prolonged exposure or natural hardiness, you have grown immune to some diseases and resistant to all others.

Prerequisite: Constitution 13.

Benefit: You are immune to one specific type of disease, such as the red ache or mummy rot. In addition, you gain

a +2 circumstance bonus on saving throws against other diseases (including magical diseases). You recover points lost to ability damage from disease at double the normal rate (2 points per day, rather than 1). If someone with the Heal skill (including yourself) uses your blood to help someone with the disease to which you are immune, the diseased character automatically makes his saving throw to recover. If your blood is used to aid in the healing of someone with any other disease, it provides a +4 bonus on the Heal check.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time you take it, you become immune to a new disease. The +2 circumstance bonus against other diseases does not stack with itself, since the circumstances of each disease immunity are essentially the same.

DRACONIC ARCHIVIST

In addition to your studies of the darkness, you have spent time studying dragons and constructs.

Prerequisite: Dark knowledge.

Benefit: You can use your dark knowledge ability on dragons and constructs. You use Knowledge (arcana) for dark knowledge checks regarding these two creature types.

Normal: Without this feat, a character with dark knowledge can use that class feature only on aberrations, elementals, magical beasts, outsiders, and undead.

DREAMTELLING

You can use your Knowledge (the planes) skill to interpret your dreams or the dreams of others, thus gleaning useful information and insights.

Benefit: You can interpret the basic symbolism of a dream to figure out what sorts of concerns or fears are likely to have inspired it.

Dream Being Interpreted . . .	Knowledge (the planes) DC
Features obvious symbolism	10
Involves cultural details or concepts with which you are not very familiar	15
Represents memories of past events with which you are not familiar	20
Both the previous conditions are true	25

Attempting to garner insight into future events, or events occurring elsewhere, by reading the prophetic images of a dream adds +10 to +20 to the base DC, depending on how obscure the omens are.

The DM must decide if a dream contains prophetic imagery; a sufficiently high roll might glean some information even if the dream was not overtly oracular. Making the DC required to interpret a dream grants information comparable to an *augury* spell (see page 202 of the *Player's Handbook*). Exceeding the required check by 10 or more offers information comparable to a *divination* spell (see page 224 of the *Player's Handbook*). Exceeding the required check by 20 or more offers information comparable to a *commune* spell (see page 211 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Even if your result was not high enough to enable you to read prophetic images, the result might be sufficient to interpret basic symbols and events. Thus, a check result of 18 is insufficient to foretell the future but still grants some information about cultural details or concepts.

You can use this feat to determine what effect injuries received in a dreamscape are likely to have on you once you return (DC 15), or whether an item or location was created by the dreamer or brought in from outside (DC 20); see Chapter 3 for information on adventuring within dreamscapes.

Finally, this feat allows Knowledge (the planes) to function in place of Survival when used within a dreamscape. This skill can be used to retrace your steps and return to a known person's dream, or to attempt to track a creature across the dreamscape.

Action: Dreamtelling requires careful analysis of bizarre images and events. If you are trying to interpret your own dream, you must cogitate on it for a number of minutes equal to 30 minus your Intelligence modifier. If you wish to analyze someone else's dream, that person must first describe it to you in great detail, adding an additional 10+1d10 minutes to the process.

Try Again: No. The check represents your ability to interpret that particular dream. You can attempt to interpret other dreams the same individual has later, but you get only one attempt per dream. Similarly, you have only one attempt to determine whether an item is native to a particular dream.

Special: Most campaigns are not set up to interact with the dream world. Hence, this feat is only available if the DM specifically states that he has decided to allow it in his campaign.

ELDRITCH CORRUPTION [TAINTED]

You can add power to your spells or spell-like abilities at the expense of your companions' health.

Prerequisites: Any one metamagic feat, moderate depravity.

Benefit: You can enlarge, extend, heighten, or widen a spell, as though you had the appropriate metamagic feat, without increasing the spell level or, for spontaneous casters, casting time. You can apply any number of these metamagic effects to a spell in this way; if you choose heighten, then that spell's level is heightened by up to two levels.

For each level of metamagic you apply, one of your allies takes 2 points of Constitution damage. In this case, "ally" is defined as someone who knowingly and willingly fights alongside you against a common foe, or who otherwise considers you a trusted companion. You decide, when casting the spell, which ally takes the Constitution damage. You cannot select an ally immune to Constitution damage or an ally without a Constitution score. For purposes of this spell, you cannot designate a summoned or charmed being as your ally.

You can use this feat three times per day.

Special: You can select this feat more than once. Each time you do, you gain an additional three uses per day.

FONT OF LIFE

Your life-force is strong enough to make you highly resistant to all forms of energy drain and level loss.

Prerequisite: Must be a living creature.

Benefit: Whenever you are struck by an attack that drains energy or bestows negative levels, you gain an immediate saving throw to resist the effect at the standard Difficulty Class of the attack. If this initial save is successful, you avoid any negative levels but you still suffer any other effects of the attack or spell. If this save fails, the attack proceeds as if this roll had never been made (meaning you still receive whatever save to which you're normally entitled).

FORBIDDEN LORE [TAINTED]

You gain hideous insights into subjects not meant to be understood by mortal minds.

Prerequisites: Bardic knowledge or lore, mild depravity.

Benefit: When you make a bardic knowledge or lore check, you add a bonus to the check if the question touches on supernatural, horrific, tainted, or otherwise forbidden subjects (at the DM's discretion). Add a +2 bonus if you are mildly tainted, a +4 bonus if you are moderately tainted, and a +6 bonus if you are severely tainted.

GREATER CORRUPT SPELL FOCUS

Your corrupt spells are now even more potent than they were before.

Prerequisites: Corrupt Spell Focus, nongood alignment.

Benefit: You gain an additional +1 to the DC of all spells you cast that contain a corrupt component. This stacks with the bonus gained from the Corrupt Spell Focus feat, for a total of +2.

HAUNTING MELODY

You can use your music to inspire fear.

Prerequisites: Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks.

Benefit: When you sing or use some other Perform skill, you can inspire fear in enemies within 30 feet of you. Any opponent in range must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your bard level + your Cha modifier) or become shaken for a number of rounds equal to your ranks in the Perform skill. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Special: Using this ability counts as one of your daily uses of bardic music.

IMPROVED ONEIROMANCY

With the Improved Oneiromancy feat, you gain additional dream-related spellcasting abilities.

Prerequisites: Dreamcasting, Oneiromancy, spellcaster.

Benefit: Your spell list expands to include a number of dream-related spells (all described later in this chapter), regardless of what sort of caster you might be. You must still learn or prepare these spells normally; they are added to your class list, not necessarily to the list of spells you personally know.

1st Level: *restful slumber*
4th Level: *dream walk, manifest desire, manifest nightmare*
5th Level: *dreaming puppet*
7th Level: *dream sight*

LUNATIC INSIGHT [TAINTED]

Your madness grants you insight and knowledge.

Prerequisite: Mild depravity.

Benefit: Due to unpredictable flashes of insight, you are considered trained in all Knowledge skills, even if you have no ranks in them. You also gain a +2 morale bonus on initiative rolls and to resist mind-affecting spells and abilities.

Normal: Knowledge skills cannot be used untrained.

MAD FAITH [TAINTED]

Your depravity has twisted the connection between you and your patron deity. You suffer flashes of insight interrupted by flashes of madness.

Prerequisites: Ability to cast 1st-level divine spells, mild depravity.

Benefit: You gain a bonus 1st-level divine spell per day. If you have moderate depravity, then you also gain a 2nd-level divine spell per day. If you have severe depravity, then you also gain a 3rd-level divine spell per day. However, it takes twice as long for you to pray for your spells each day.

With the Font of Life feat, Eberk stands strong against the undead

MASTER OF KNOWLEDGE

You have spent most of your life in study, and it comes naturally to you now.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to all Knowledge skill checks.

ONEIROMANCY

You gain a number of abilities and advantages related to dreams and magic.

Prerequisites: Dreamtelling, ability to cast spells of any sort.

Benefit: Oneiromancy grants you a number of interrelated bonuses. First, when casting spells in a nightmare realm, your spells always work as normal; you do not risk the same mishaps that other casters experience.

Illus. by D. Scott

Second, while in the dreamscape, you are considered to have Spell Focus (enchantment) and Spell Focus (illusion), due to your ability to manipulate the thoughts of dreamers and the stuff of dreams. If you already have Spell Focus in one or both of these schools, the DC bonus to saves stacks so long as you remain within the dreamscape.

Third, you can target your offensive spells at a target's dream self, rather than his physical form. Because this deals mental damage only, it transforms all damage dealt by that spell into nonlethal damage. This effect functions only on creatures that both sleep and dream: Constructs, plants, undead, and elves are immune to this effect. Only spells that target a single creature or specific number of creatures benefit from this effect; you cannot apply it to spells that target an area.

Special: Because you are more tightly connected to the world of dreams, you are more susceptible to certain types of mental manipulation. You take a –1 penalty on saves against enchantment and illusion spells and effects when in the physical realm. If you are slain while mentally traveling the dreamscape, your physical body dies, whether or not this is the case for most travelers.

Normal: Casters in nightmare realms have a chance of mishap when casting spells. In some instances, those who die in the dreamscape experience effects other than death in the real world. See Adventuring in Nightmare Realms in Chapter 3.

PURE SOUL

Your faith or purity of mind overrides the evils within you. You are immune to taint.

Prerequisites: Any non-evil alignment, no taint.

Benefit: You do not gain taint.

SPIRIT SENSE

You can see and communicate with the souls of the recently departed.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 12, must have had a near-death experience (that is, must have fallen below 0 hit points).

Benefit: You can see the spirits of creatures who have died within a number of minutes equal to your Wisdom bonus. For instance, if your Wisdom is 17 (+3 bonus), you can see the spirits of creatures that have died within the past 3 minutes. You can speak with these spirits, but you gain no special ability to command them or to communicate with them if you do not share a language. These spirits are not creatures per se and cannot be harmed or affected in any way, magical or otherwise.

In addition, you gain a +4 circumstance bonus on Listen or Spot checks made to detect incorporeal creatures.

SURGE OF MALEVOLENCE [TAINTED]

You empower yourself by drawing on the taint within.

Prerequisite: Mild taint.

Benefit: Once per day, you can add a bonus on any single attack roll, saving throw, or check. You must make the decision to add the bonus before you roll the die. The amount that you add varies, based on your corruption. If you have mild corruption, then the bonus is equal to +3. If you have moderate corruption, then the bonus is equal to +6. If you have severe corruption, then the bonus is equal to +9.

TAINTED FURY [TAINTED]

You can channel your physical corruption into a state of fury.

Prerequisites: Constitution 13, moderate corruption.

Benefit: Embracing the corruption within your body, you can enter a state of tainted fury. In this state, you gain a number of hit points equal to your corruption score. These hit points are not lost first like temporary hit points; when your tainted fury ends, you must subtract this number from your hit point total.

During your tainted fury, you can declare one melee attack to be a tainted smite and add half your corruption score to the damage dealt by that attack. If you strike a creature immune to the effects of taint (such as an undead creature or a creature with the Evil subtype), that tainted smite is expended but deals no additional damage.

Your tainted fury lasts for a number of rounds equal to your corruption score. When it ends, you must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + your corruption score). If you fail this save, you take 1d6 points of Constitution damage and are sickened for 1 minute.

TOUCH OF TAINT [MONSTROUS]

One of your attack forms that normally deals ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain can also deal corruption or depravity.

Prerequisites: Natural attack that deals ability damage (including poison), ability drain, or energy drain.

Benefit: Choose one of your natural attacks that deals ability damage or ability drain or bestows negative levels. That attack now increases the target's corruption or depravity score by 1 point along with the ability damage or drain it deals. If your attack deals ability damage or drain to a physical ability score (Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution), it now also increases the target's corruption score. If the attack deals ability damage or drain to a mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma), it now also increases the target's depravity score. If the attack bestows negative levels, you can choose whether it increases a specific target's corruption or depravity score.

If the attack you choose bestows more than one negative level, it now increases the target's taint score by 2 points. You can choose to have it increase a target's corruption by 2 points, increase a target's depravity by 2 points, or increase each score by 1 point.

UNNATURAL WILL

You have learned to focus your force of personality and inner strength to stand against fearful circumstances.

Prerequisites: Charisma 12, Iron Will.

Benefit: Add your Charisma modifier to all Will saves against fear effects. This bonus stacks with any Wisdom bonus you might have to Will saves.

Special: This feat is used by dread witches to resist the negative effects of fear while still empowering their mystical abilities.

WILLING DEFORMITY [VILE]

Through scarification, self-mutilation, or supplication to dark powers, you intentionally mar your own body.

Prerequisite: Evil alignment.

Benefit: You gain a +3 bonus on Intimidate checks.

Dread Magic

Power-crazed sorcerers conjure demons from the nether pits of the Abyss. Mad wizards spill their own blood to give strength to their spells and bindings. Necromancers make the dead walk, and sap the life from the living. The stuff of horror already informs the magic of the D&D game. This section includes new spells and artifacts for characters and (especially) villains in a horror game.

VARIANT: EVIL SPELLS AND TAINT

Under this variant, casting evil spells causes the caster to acquire taint. Each time a character casts a spell with the evil descriptor, he must make a Will save (DC 10 + spell level) or increase his depravity score by 1.

The tainted scholar prestige class uses this rule by default, as specified in the class description (see Tainted Spellcasting, page 115). As a variant, the Dungeon Master can impose this penalty on characters of any class who cast evil spells.

CORRUPT SPELLS

Those who delve into black magic have learned of exceedingly evil spells that take an appalling toll on the caster in exchange for their powerful but foul effects. These vile applications of magic are known as corrupt spells. They are thankfully few in number.

Spellcasters prepare corrupt spells just as they do regular spells, but corrupt spells are available only to spellcasters who prepare spells. Wizards and clerics, for example, can use corrupt magic, but sorcerers and bards cannot normally do so. A sorcerer or bard could, however, cast a corrupt spell from a scroll. In addition, the Corrupt Arcana feat presented on page 120 allows spontaneous spellcasters to prepare and cast corrupt spells.

A corrupt spell has no material component, but it does have a corruption cost. Casting a corrupt spell draws power from the mental or physical well-being of the caster in the form of ability damage or ability drain. The ability damage or drain occurs when the spell's duration expires. No corrupt spells have a permanent duration.

If a corrupt spell is made into a potion, scroll, wand, or other magic item, the user of the item takes the ability damage or ability drain, not the creator. This corruption cost, mentioned in the spell's descriptive text, is paid each time the item is used.

Corrupt spells are not specific to any character class. Furthermore, they aren't inherently divine or arcane spells; a divine caster casting a corrupt spell casts it as a divine spell, and an arcane caster casts it as an arcane spell.

Book of Vile Darkness includes additional spells beyond the ones contained in this chapter.

SPELL LISTS

Following are the lists for all standard classes of new spells and domains presented in this book.

BARD SPELLS

5th Level

Cloak of Hate: Target provokes hostile reactions, takes –10 penalty on Diplomacy checks.

6th Level

Familial Geas: Commands subject to undertake a task, which passes to his nearest kin if he dies.

BLACKGUARD SPELLS

1st Level

Summon Undead I: Summons undead to fight for you.

2nd Level

Summon Undead II: Summons undead to fight for you.

3rd Level

Summon Undead III: Summons undead to fight for you.

4th Level

Summon Undead IV: Summons undead to fight for you.

CLERIC SPELLS

1st Level

Detect Taint: Reveals creatures or objects with taint.

Summon Undead I: Summons undead to fight for you.

2nd Level

Summon Undead II: Summons undead to fight for you.

3rd Level

Resist Taint: Bestows +4 bonus on saves against taint.

Rigor Mortis: Suspends all vital functions; target appears dead.

Summon Undead III: Summons undead to fight for you.

4th Level

Pronouncement of Fate: Imposes a –4 penalty on an offender's attacks, damage, saves, and checks; target loses actions.

Summon Undead IV: Summons undead to fight for you.

5th Level

Fire in the Blood**: Your blood becomes a potent corrosive that burns attackers.

Oath of Blood: Extends a *geas* beyond death that compels the target to animate and continue his quest as undead.

Summon Undead V: Summons undead to fight for you.

6th Level

Cloak of Hate: Target provokes hostile reactions, takes –10 penalty on Diplomacy checks.

7th Level

Harm, Greater: Deals 12 points/level to target within Close range.
Pact of Return*: If you die as you predict, you are *resurrected* instantly.

8th Level

Familial Geas: Commands subject to undertake a task, which passes to his nearest kin if he dies.

9th Level

Imprison Soul[F*]: Traps soul in a small object; target takes 1d4 Con damage/day.
Plague of Undead[M]: Animates horde of undead.
Vile Death[MX]: Undead creature gains fiendish template.

DREAD DOMAINS

The following domains support material found elsewhere in this book—rules for oneiromancy and dreamwalking in Chapter 3 and in the feats section of this chapter and Cas, the demigod of spite, in Chapter 1.

Dream Domain

Deities: A few deities include dreams in their portfolios. The following domain is available to clerics of such deities, who often take the Dreamtelling and Oneiromancy feats.

Granted Power: Because you have long delved into dreams and nightmares, you are immune to fear effects.

Dream Domain Spells

1 **Sleep:** Puts 4 HD of creatures into magical slumber.
2 **Augury**[MF]: Learns whether an action will be good or bad.
3 **Deep Slumber:** Puts 10 HD of creatures to sleep.
4 **Phantasmal Killer:** Fearsome illusion kills subject or deals 3d6 damage.
5 **Nightmare:** Sends vision dealing 1d10 damage, fatigue.
6 **Dream Sight***: Your spirit can leave your body and explore for 1 min./level.
7 **Scrying, Greater**[F]: As *scrying*, but faster and longer.
8 **Power Word Stun:** Stuns creature with 150 hp or less.
9 **Weird:** As *phantasmal killer*, but affects all within 30 ft.
*New spell described in this chapter.

Spite Domain

Deities: Cas

Granted Power: Sympathetic strike. You can force opponents to take damage they have dealt you. Once per day, you can make a melee touch attack on the target, and deal damage equal to the damage the target dealt to you in the last round, to a maximum of 5 hp per divine caster level you possess.

Spite Domain Spells

1 **Bestow Wound**[M*]: Transfer 1 hp/level of wounds to another.
2 **Rage:** Gain +2 to Str and Con, +1 on Will saves, –2 to AC.
3 **Vampiric Touch:** Touch deals 1d6/two levels in damage; you gain damage as hp.
4 **Pronouncement of Fate***: Impose a –4 penalty on an offender's attacks, damage, saves, and checks; target loses actions.
5 **Fire in the Blood***: Your blood becomes a potent corrosive that burns attackers.
6 **Cloak of Hate***: Target provokes hostile reactions, takes –10 penalty to Diplomacy checks.
7 **Pact of Return***: If you die as you predict, you are *resurrected* instantly.
8 **Mantle of Pure Spite***: Gain a cumulative DR 1/— and a cumulative +1 bonus on attacks, damage, and AC each time a foe strikes you.
9 **Imprison Soul**[F*]: Traps soul in a small object; target takes 1d4 Con damage/day.
*New spell described in this chapter.

DEATH DELVER SPELLS

2nd Level

Rigor Mortis: Suspends all vital functions; target appears dead.

DREAD NECROMANCER SPELLS

1st Level

Bestow Wound[M]: Transfer 1 hp/level of wounds to another.
Summon Undead I: Summons undead to fight for you.

2nd Level

Summon Undead II: Summons undead to fight for you.

3rd Level

Summon Undead III: Summons undead to fight for you.

4th Level

Summon Undead IV: Summons undead to fight for you.

5th Level

Fire in the Blood: Your blood becomes a potent corrosive that burns attackers.
Oath of Blood: Extends a *geas* beyond death that compels the target to animate and continue his quest as undead.
Summon Undead V: Summons undead to fight for you.

7th Level

Harm, Greater: Deals 12 points/level to target within Close range.
Vile Death[MX]: Undead creature gains fiendish template

9th Level

Harm, Mass: Deals 12 points/level to all targets within 20-ft. burst.
Imprison Soul[F]: Traps soul in a small object; target takes 1d4 Con damage/day.
Plague of Undead[M]: Animates horde of undead.

DRUID SPELL

3rd Level

Resist Taint: Bestows +4 bonus on saves against taint.

PALADIN SPELL

3rd Level
Resist Taint: Bestows +4 bonus on saves against taint.

RANGER SPELL

3rd Level
Resist Taint: Bestows +4 bonus on saves against taint.

SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

1st Level
Bestow Wound[M*]: Transfer 1 hp/level of wounds to another.
Summon Undead I: Summons undead to fight for you.

2nd Level
Summon Undead II: Summons undead to fight for you.

3rd Level
Resist Taint: Bestows +4 bonus on saves against taint.
Summon Undead III: Summons undead to fight for you.

4th Level
Summon Undead IV: Summons undead to fight for you.

5th Level
Oath of Blood: Extends a *geas* beyond death that compels the target to animate and continue his quest as undead.
Summon Undead V: Summons undead to fight for you.

6th Level
Cloak of Hate: Target provokes hostile reactions, takes –10 penalty on Diplomacy checks.

8th Level
Familial Geas: Commands subject to undertake a task, which passes to his nearest kin if he dies.

9th Level
Plague of Undead[M]: Animates horde of undead.
Vile Death[MX]: Undead creature gains fiendish template.

CORRUPT SPELLS

5th Level
Call Forth the Beast: Target wakes up chaotic evil and goes on a rampage.

6th Level
Master's Lament: Target and familiar take each other's damage as well as their own.

7th Level
Chain of Sorrow: Target takes 2d10 Cha drain, deals same to next ally he touches.

ONEIROMANCY SPELLS

1st Level
Restful Slumber: Sleep soundly, without nightmares.

4th Level
Dream Walk: As many as eight subjects enter a dreamscape.
Manifest Desire: Target's greatest desire appears before him.
Manifest Nightmare: Target's greatest fear appears before him, making him shaken or panicked.

5th Level
Dreaming Puppet: Control the physical body of a sleeping creature.

7th Level
Dream Sight: Your spirit can leave your body and explore for 1 min./level.

SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

The new spells presented here include evil spells, corrupt spells, necromancy spells, spells for the dread necromancer class, spells for the new domains (Spite and Dream), and a few spells useful for true heroes in a world of dread.

BESTOW WOUND
Transmutation
Level: Dread necromancer 1, sorcerer/wizard 1, Spite 1
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Living creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

If wounded, you can cast this spell and touch a living creature. The target takes damage equal to your wounds at the rate of 1 point of damage per your caster level, or the amount needed to bring you up to your maximum hit points, whichever is less. At the same time, you heal that much damage, as if a *cure* spell had been cast on you.

Material Component: A small eye agate worth at least 10 gp.

CALL FORTH THE BEAST
Enchantment (Compulsion) [Evil, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Corrupt 5
Components: V, S, F, Corrupt
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One humanoid of Hit Dice equal to caster level +4 or less
Duration: Permanent until discharged, then 1 hour/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

The target of this spell experiences no immediate effect. The next time he falls asleep, however, he immediately reawakens with a chaotic evil alignment and a bloodthirsty, temperamental, and even psychotic disposition. The subject has no particular goals during this time except to shed blood and slaughter anyone who aggravates or irritates him; even

the most innocent action might result in violence.

When the spell expires, the subject passes out momentarily, and reawakens with no memory of anything he might have done while under the effect of the spell. So far as he can tell, he simply fell asleep hours earlier, and he has no idea what has happened since then. He has gained no rest, cannot prepare arcane spells, and might be fatigued (if appropriate).

Focus: The tongue of an executed murderer.

Corruption Cost: 1d4 points of Constitution damage.

CHAIN OF SORROW

Necromancy [Evil]
Level: Corrupt 7
Components: V, S, F, Corrupt
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature to start, possibly more; see text
Duration: See below
Saving Throw: Will half, and see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

The target of this spell takes 2d10 points of Charisma drain (Will half). If he makes his saving throw, the spell has no further effect. If he fails, however, the chain continues. The next time he touches a friend, loved one, or ally, that individual takes the same damage: 2d10 points of Charisma drain, or half with a successful save. If this second victim fails the save, he then becomes the host for the spell, and the effect continues with the first friend or ally that he touches. This effect continues until the chain is broken by a successful save or until it has affected a number of people equal to the spell's caster level.

Focus: The umbilical cord of a stillborn child.

Corruption Cost: 2d4 points of Charisma damage.

CLOAK OF HATE

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Bard 5, cleric 6, sorcerer/wizard 6, Spite 6
Components: V, S, M, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 day/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Living beings view the subject of this spell with instinctive hostility. All NPC reactions begin one category worse than they otherwise would (see page 72 of the *Player's Handbook*), and any Diplomacy checks to moderate those reactions take a –10 circumstance penalty. Furthermore, people view the target in the worst possible light. If, for example, a community is hunting for an unknown murderer, they will assume that the subject of the spell is guilty of the crime. Player characters and NPCs who know the subject well, such as old friends or loved ones, are unaffected.

Material Component: One ounce of bile.

DETECT TAINT

Divination
Level: Cleric 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 60 ft.
Area: Cone-shaped emanation
Duration: Concentration, up to 10 min./level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You can sense the presence of taint in nearby objects and creatures. The amount of information revealed depends on how long you study a particular area or subject:

1st Round: Presence or absence of taint within the area.

2nd Round: Number of tainted creatures in the area and the strength of the strongest tainted aura present. If you are free of taint, if the strongest tainted aura is overwhelming (see below), and if the strength of the tainted aura is at least twice your character level, you are nauseated for 1 round and the spell ends.

3rd Round: The strength and location of each tainted aura. If a tainted aura is outside your line of sight, you discern its direction but not its exact location.

Aura Strength: The strength of a tainted aura depends on the corruption or depravity score (whichever is higher) of the creature you are detecting, or the amount of taint bestowed by an object, location, or creature without a taint score.

Taint Score	Taint Bestowed	Aura Strength
1	0*	Faint
2–6	1	Moderate
7–14	1d2 or 1d3	Strong
15+	1d4 or more	Overwhelming

*An object or location that is tainted in some way but does not bestow taint generally has a faint aura strength.

If an aura falls into more than one strength category, you learn about the stronger of the two.

Length Aura Lingers: How long the aura lingers depends on its original strength:

Original Strength	Duration of Lingering Aura
Faint	1d6 minutes
Moderate	1d6×10 minutes
Strong	1d6 hours
Overwhelming	1d6 days

Each round, you can turn to detect things in a new area. The spell can penetrate barriers, but 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks it.

DREAM SIGHT

Divination
Level: Dream 6, oneiromancy 7
Components: S, DF
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: See text
Target: You
Duration: 1 min/level (D)

You fall into a deep sleep while your spirit leaves your body in incorporeal form and travels to distant locations. Your spirit can move 100 feet per round and can see and hear anything you could if you were in the same location. The spirit can be blocked by any spell that wards incorporeal creatures, and it can be detected and attacked in the same way as incorporeal creatures can. Your spirit can do nothing but move and observe—it cannot speak, attack, cast spells, or perform any other action.

At the end of the spell, your spirit instantaneously returns to your body and you wake up. If your body is disturbed while your spirit is wandering, the spell ends immediately.

DREAM WALK

Conjuration (Teleportation)
Level: Oneiromancy 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched, or up to eight willing creatures joining hands
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You move yourself or some other creature into a dreamscape. You must either be able to see the dreamer whose dreams you wish to enter or be within 30 feet of him. This spell otherwise functions exactly as *plane shift*.

DREAMING PUPPET

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Oneiromancy 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Unlimited
Target: One sentient, living creature of caster's HD +4 or lower
Duration: 1 min./level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You take control of the physical body of a sleeping creature. At the beginning of the spell, you must name the subject or identify him by some title that leaves no doubt as to his identity. You then enter a trance and appear in the subject's dream. So long as you remain in his dream, you see the world through the eyes of his physical form, and you control his body as per the spell *dominate monster* (see page 224 of the *Player's Handbook*). The subject is aware of you in his dream, and can identify you if he knows you personally. Once the spell ends, or if the subject shakes off the effect due to a new save granted by instructions contrary to his moral code (this new save gains a +2 bonus; see *dominate person*), he remembers what he has done while under the effects of *dreaming puppet*. These memories are dreamlike and not entirely clear, but the subject recalls the gist of all that happened.

If the recipient is awake when the spell begins, you can choose to wake up (ending the spell) or remain in the trance. You can remain in the trance until the recipient goes to sleep (assuming the spell's duration lasts that long), then enter the recipient's dream and dominate him as normal. If you are disturbed and awaken during the trance, the spell ends.

Creatures who don't sleep (such as elves, but not half-elves), don't dream, or are otherwise immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities are immune to this spell.

You are unaware of your own surroundings or of the activities around you while in the trance. You are defenseless both physically and mentally (you always fail any saving throw) while in the trance.

Dreaming puppet carries an element of risk for you as well as for the subject. If the target exceeds the required Will save by 10 or more, or rolls a natural 20, not only are you barred from controlling him but your soul becomes lost in the dreamscape, unable to easily return to your own body. In order to return to your body, you must either find your way through the realm of dreams (and possibly other planes as well), cast a planar traveling spell, or be rescued.

Jozan makes his blood into a weapon

FAMILIAL GEAS

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Language-Dependent, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Bard 6, cleric 8, sorcerer/wizard 8
Components: V
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: Until discharged
Saving Throw: None or Will negates; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is a far more potent version of *geas*. The duration of the geas is unlimited; it lasts until the subject(s) either discharge the obligation or the effect is dispelled.

The initial subject of the spell gains no save, as per a standard *geas* (see page 234 of the *Player's Handbook*). If the target dies before completing the obligation, the geas transfers to his closest adult relative. This new subject is entitled to a save; if she succeeds, the geas is broken and the spell ends. If not, she labors under the geas until she either completes the obligation, succeeds in dispelling the geas, or dies and potentially passes the geas to her closest adult relative. Each new subject has an instinctive understanding of the nature of the obligation. A *familial geas* can be broken only by a successful save on the part of the next successor, *remove curse* (if cast by someone two caster levels higher than the *familial geas*), *miracle*, or *wish*.

FIRE IN THE BLOOD

Transmutation
Level: Cleric 5, Spite 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

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This unsettling spell enables you to make deadly weapons of your own arteries and veins. Once the spell is cast, your blood takes on a mystical potency that makes it more corrosive than the strongest acid to anyone who draws it from you. From then on, until the spell's duration has elapsed, anyone who deals slashing or piercing melee damage on you is sprayed with your blood in retribution. The blood deals a cumulative 1d6 points of damage per attack upon your attacker, with no save or spell resistance applicable, up to a maximum of 5d6. Thus, the first time a foe hits you with a slashing or piercing weapon, he instantly takes 1d6 points of damage from the sanguinary backlash. The second time that same foe strikes you, he takes 2d6 points of damage. As soon as any single foe has taken 5d6 points of damage in a single spray from your corrosive blood, the spell ends.

Opponents striking you with magical attacks that do not manifest in a slashing or piercing manner, or those striking you with only bludgeoning weapons, do not trigger the retributive blood spray.

The arc and direction of the blood spray is magical in nature, and the spray does not splatter adjacent squares or parties, no matter how close together they might be. Each spray strikes only the one responsible for the wound.

Material Component: A drop of your own blood.

HARM, GREATER

Level: Cleric 7, dread necromancer 7
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature

As *harm* (see page 239 of the *Player's Handbook*), except as noted above and in that this spell deals 1d12 points of damage per caster level, to a maximum of 20d12 at 20th level.

HARM, MASS

Level: Dread necromancer 9
Range: 20 ft.
Area: 20-ft.-radius burst centered on caster
Targets: All creatures except the caster in the area

As *greater harm*, except as noted above.

IMPRISON SOUL

Necromancy [Evil]
Level: Cleric 9, dread necromancer 9, Spite 9
Components: V, S, M, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action; see text
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: Permanent; see text
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

By casting *imprison soul*, you place the subject's soul in a receptacle, such as a gem, ring, or some other miniscule object, leaving his body lifeless. While trapped, the subject takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage per day until dead or freed. The rituals to prepare the receptacle require three days. Destroying or opening the receptacle ends the spell, releasing the soul.

To cast the spell, you must know the name of the target. The receptacle must be within spell range and you must know where it is.

Material Component: A portion of the target's body (a fingernail, a strand of hair, or some other small part).

Focus: A Tiny or smaller object to be the receptacle for the subject's soul.

Note: This updated version of this spell supersedes earlier published descriptions.

MANIFEST DESIRE

Illusion [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Oneiromancy 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: Concentration + 3 rounds
Saving Throw: Will disbelief (if interacted with)
Spell Resistance: Yes

The target's greatest desire appears before his in illusory form for all to see. Interaction with the image allows a Will save to disbelieve.

Many casters use this spell simply to learn the subject's greatest desire, not caring whether the illusion deceives the subject.

MANIFEST NIGHTMARE

Illusion [Fear, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Oneiromancy 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: Concentration + 3 rounds
Saving Throw: Will partial or disbelief (if interacted with)
Spell Resistance: Yes

The target's greatest fear appears before him in illusory form for all to see. So long as the nightmare remains manifest and in the subject's proximity, he must make a Will save every round or become panicked. Success on this save indicates that the subject is only shaken that round. This save is repeated every round for the spell's duration, until and unless the subject makes a successful save to disbelieve the illusion. In order to disbelieve the illusion, the subject must first force himself to interact with it, to determine that it might be false.

Many casters use this spell simply to learn the nature of the subject's greatest fear, not caring whether the illusion actually causes the subject to panic.

MANTLE OF PURE SPITE

Necromancy
Level: Spite 8
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 min./level

By means of this spell, you wrap yourself in a pulsating nimbus of netherlight—the mystical aggregate of all your unresolved frustration and rage. Anyone foolish enough to attack you while this nimbus is in effect is in for a most unpleasant surprise.

Each time you are the target of an attack, you gain increasingly greater power over your attacker. First, this spell generates a cumulative +1 bonus to all attack rolls and to damage against that foe each and every time it strikes you, up to a maximum bonus equal to your level. Second, you gain the ability to overcome any damage reduction your opponent might have, as though you possessed the necessary alignment or weapon materials. Last but not least, you gain a cumulative damage reduction of your own, equal to 1/— each time your opponent

strikes you, up to a maximum benefit of DR 15/—.

If you are fighting multiple opponents, you must keep track of how many times each one has struck you in order to determine the benefits this spell grants you against each. A *mantle of pure spite* provides its benefits even at range, so a wizard launching harmful spells at you from what he thinks is a safe distance will still kindle the *mantle of pure spite*'s nimbus and experience its spiteful reprisals.

Material Component: A smidgen of your spit.

MASTER'S LAMENT

Transmutation [Evil]
Level: Corrupt 6
Components: V, S, Corrupt
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One humanoid creature with a familiar or other empathically linked animal companion
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell strengthens the bond between master and familiar. For the duration of the spell, any damage or magical effect (*charm*, *energy drain*, etc.) taken by the master is also taken by the familiar, and vice versa. If the effect allows a save, both master and familiar roll their saves separately.

This spell can be cast on either the master or the familiar.

Corruption Cost: 1d6 points of Charisma damage.

OATH OF BLOOD

Necromancy
Level: Cleric 5, sorcerer/wizard 5
Components: V, S, M, DF
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: See below
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

Oath of blood functions only when cast on a creature that has recently been subject to a *geas* or similar spell. It extends the reach of the *geas* beyond death. If the individual subject to the *geas* dies before completing the task, *oath of blood* animates him as an undead creature in order that he might continue his quest. The nature of the undead creature is determined by the caster level of this spell, as per *create undead* (see page 215 of the *Player's Handbook*). Once the task is complete or the original *geas* (or similar spell) expires, the magic animating the subject ends and he returns to death.

Material Component: Grave dirt mixed with powdered onyx worth at least 40 gp per HD of the target.

PACT OF RETURN

Necromancy
Level: Cleric 7, Spite 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 hour/level

This spell allows you to establish the conditions whereby you will be brought back to life upon your death. When you cast *pact of return*, you must state either a specific creature or a set of specific circumstances that you expect will be responsible for your death at some point within the spell's duration. If you name a creature, that creature does not have to deal the deathblow to trigger the release of the spell, but it must play an active part in your demise. If you name a set of circumstances, those circumstances must be reasonably specific or the spell will fail, leaving you well and truly dead. An acceptable set of circumstances would be, "I expect energy draining to play a pivotal role in my demise," whereas an unacceptable set would be, "I expect to die from loss of hit points." The DM decides whether the terms are acceptable.

Whether the subject of your demise is a specific person or a specific source, you must die (that is, reach –10 hit points or lower) for the spell to take effect. If you do, and the circumstances of your demise are similar enough to those described when you cast the spell (DM's discretion), you are instantly resurrected (see page 272 of the *Player's Handbook*) with no level loss.

You can have more than one *pact of return* active at the same time, each one to be triggered by a different foe or set of circumstances, but you must keep track of the total time that has elapsed for each. A *pact of return* that has not yet taken effect is still a magical effect (and a powerful necromantic one, at that), which can be dispelled by one who detects its presence.

PLAGUE OF UNDEAD

Necromancy [Evil]
Level: Cleric 9, dread necromancer 9, sorcerer/wizard 9
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Targets: One or more corpses within range
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell unleashes great necromantic power, raising a host of undead creatures. *Plague of undead* turns the bones or bodies of dead creatures within the spell's range into undead skeletons or zombies with maximum hit points for their Hit Dice. The undead remain animated until destroyed. (A destroyed skeleton or zombie can't be animated again.)

Regardless of the specific numbers or kinds of undead created with this spell, a single casting of *plague of undead* can't create more HD of undead than four times your caster level.

The undead you create remain under your control indefinitely and follow your spoken commands. However, no matter how many times you use this spell or *animate dead* (see page 198 of the *Player's Handbook*), you can only control 4 HD worth of undead creatures per caster level; creatures you animate with either spell count against this limit. If you exceed this number, newly created creatures fall under your control and any excess undead from previous castings of this spell or *animate dead* become uncontrolled. Anytime this limit causes you to release some of the undead you control through this spell or *animate dead*, you choose which undead are released.

The bones and bodies required for this spell follow the same restrictions as *animate dead*. All the material to be animated by this spell must be within range when the spell is cast.

Material Component: A black sapphire worth 100 gp or several black sapphires with total value of 100 gp.

PRONOUNCEMENT OF FATE

Necromancy
Level: Cleric 4, Spite 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates or Will partial; see text
Spell Resistance: Special

To invoke this spell, you speak the name of an offense that your target has committed. Then you speak the inevitable doom that will fall upon him as a result of his transgression. (The target need neither understand nor even hear this pronouncement.) An affected target takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and checks for the duration of the spell. If the offense you named was committed against you personally (although not necessarily against you alone), the target also has a 50% chance of losing all actions on his turn for the duration of the spell.

The spell's power can be more difficult to resist, depending on who suffered from the offense specified by the casting. If you were personally affected by the offense (in the DM's judgment), then the target can only hope to reduce the deleterious effects of the spell by half on a successful Will save. You receive a +4 bonus on your caster level check to overcome the spell resistance of any creature whose crime affected you personally. A successful save in these circumstances results in the target taking a –2 penalty on attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and checks. In addition, he has a 25% chance to lose all his actions for the duration of the spell.

Any target whose offense did not affect you personally gets his full spell resistance, and a successful Will save negates the effects of the *pronouncement of fate*.

RESIST TAINT

Abjuration
Level: Cleric 3, druid 3, paladin 3, ranger 3, sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 min./level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell grants a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws made to resist acquiring taint.

RESTFUL SLUMBER

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Oneiromancy 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 hour/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes

You allow another creature to gain a full night's sleep, uninterrupted by nightmares. If you attempt to cancel the nightmares imposed by an outside source, such as a curse or another spellcaster, you must make a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) against a DC of 11 + the caster level of the nightmares' source.

RIGOR MORTIS

Necromancy
Level: Cleric 2, death delver 2
Components: S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1d6+2 rounds
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell allows you to wrap a single target in death's embrace, making him both feel and appear dead for the duration of the spell. You must be able to touch the target, and the target must have a Wisdom score, but otherwise the spell can affect any creature, including intelligent undead. You must succeed on a melee touch attack to affect unwilling targets, and those who fail their saving throws immediately fall to the ground as though dead. All vital functions (if any) are suspended; subjects of this spell do not breathe, pump blood, or otherwise indicate in any way that they still live. Any physical harm done to someone in this state immediately grants another saving throw to awaken from the artificial torpor.

Material Component: A pinch of ash from a cremated body of any kind.

SUMMON UNDEAD I

Conjuration (Summoning) [Evil]
Level: Blackguard 1, cleric 1, dread necromancer 1, sorcerer/wizard 1
Components: V, S, F/DF
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: One summoned creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell functions like *summon monster I* (see page 285 of the *Player's Handbook*), except that you summon an undead creature.

Summon undead I conjures one of the creatures from the 1st-level list in the Summon Undead table at right. You choose which creature to summon, and you can change that choice each time you cast the spell. Summoned undead do not count toward the total Hit Dice of undead that you can control with *animate dead*, *plague of undead*, or other command undead abilities. No undead creature you summon can have more Hit Dice than your caster level +1.

Focus: A tiny bag, a small candle (not lit), and a carved bone from any humanoid.

Note: The descriptions of the *summon undead* spells presented here supersede earlier published descriptions.

SUMMON UNDEAD II

Conjuration (Summoning) [Evil]
Level: Blackguard 2, cleric 2, dread necromancer 2, sorcerer/wizard 2
Effect: One or more summoned creatures, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *summon undead I*, except that you can summon one undead from the 2nd-level list or two undead of the same kind from the 1st-level list.

SUMMON UNDEAD III

Conjuration (Summoning) [Evil]
Level: Blackguard 3, cleric 3, dread necromancer 3, sorcerer/wizard 3
Effect: One or more summoned creatures, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *summon undead I*, except that you can summon one undead from the 3rd-level list, two undead of the same kind from the 2nd-level list, or four undead of the same kind from the 1st-level list.

Summon Undead

1st Level
Human warrior skeleton
Kobold zombie

2nd Level
Owlbear skeleton
Bugbear zombie

3rd Level
Ghoul
Troll skeleton
Ogre zombie

4th Level
Allip
Ghast
Wyvern zombie

5th Level
Mummy
Shadow
Vampire spawn
Wight

SUMMON UNDEAD IV

Conjuration (Summoning) [Evil]
Level: Blackguard 4, cleric 4, dread necromancer 4, sorcerer/wizard 4
Effect: One or more summoned creatures, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *summon undead I*, except that you can summon one undead from the 4th-level list, two undead of the same kind from the 3rd-level list, or four undead of the same kind from a lower-level list.

SUMMON UNDEAD V

Conjuration (Summoning) [Evil]
Level: Cleric 5, dread necromancer 5, sorcerer/wizard 5
Effect: One or more summoned creatures, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *summon undead I*, except that you can summon one undead from the 5th-level list, two undead of the same kind from the 4th-level list, or four undead of the same kind from a lower-level list.

VILE DEATH

Conjuration (Calling) [Evil]
Level: Cleric 9, dread necromancer 7, sorcerer/wizard 9
Components: V, S, M, XP
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Target: One corporeal undead creature
Duration: Permanent (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

You summon the spirit of a fiend from the depths of Hell or the Abyss and bind it into the body of a corporeal undead creature.

Binding the fiend applies the fiendish template (see page 108 of the *Monster Manual*) to the undead creature. The resulting creature is independent of you and can act on its own. Its initial attitude toward you is indifferent.

Material Component: A bit of brimstone and a bloodstone worth at least 500 gp.

XP Cost: 100 XP.

Magic Items and Artifacts

The following helpful magic item, two malign artifacts, and one minor artifact can all help contribute to the flavor of a horror campaign.

ROD OF SANCTITY

Created by the ancient purifiers who learned at the feet of Kardol Erzai himself (see page 109), the *rod of sanctity* is both a weapon and a shield against taint. It is unique to the organization not because they keep its construction secret—in fact, many purifiers would love to see the *rod* become more common—but because only a purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine can create one.

Rod of Sanctity: This rod, constructed of black iron inlaid with lapis lazuli, is a powerful tool against taint. It functions as a +2 *bane light mace* against any creature with a taint score; against all other creatures it functions as a masterwork light mace. It grants a +2 resistance bonus to any saves made to resist gaining taint. If wielded by a purifier of the Hallowed Doctrine, it adds +4 to his effective purifier level and +2 to his effective Charisma modifier for purposes of smiting tainted creatures or turning tainted creatures.

Strong abjuration; CL 11; Craft Wondrous Item, must be capable of channeling positive energy specifically against taint; Price 36,805 gp; Cost 18,250 + 1,460; Weight 8 lb.

ARTIFACTS

Sometimes a villain is defined by an evil artifact that grants him great power, intensifies his evil nature, or corrupts his original innocence, turning what was once a hero into a black-hearted villain. The artifact itself can be a villain. *Acererak's Robe* and the *Blade of Valgyr* are new evil artifacts suited for use in horror games, while the *Rod of Cas* is a minor artifact that can prove very deadly in the wrong hands.

Acererak's Robe

This horrific garment purportedly belonged to the most deceptive and pernicious lich who ever existed (although some legends attribute the robe's creation to Vecna rather than Acererak). The robe is worn and slightly tattered but still intact. It appears, to both mundane and mystical examination, to be a *robe of the archmagi* (see page 265 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), with an alignment matching that of the individual studying it. Any observer with reason to doubt can attempt a DC 30 Will save to disbelieve. Success indicates that the character knows the robe is not a *robe of the archmagi*, but he still does not know the truth of the robe's nature.

Acererak's robe grants the wearer all the abilities normally associated with the *robe of the archmagi*, regardless of alignment. It also bestows the benefits of *death ward* (see page 217 of the *Player's Handbook*) on the wearer. Its most potent ability, however, is its control over life and death. Three times per day, the wearer can cast *finger of*

death with a touch (not at range), as a 20th-level caster (see page 230 of the *Player's Handbook*). Anyone slain in this manner instantly rises as a zombie, as per the *animate dead* spell (see pages 198–199 of the *Player's Handbook*), under the control of the robe's wearer. The wearer can control a number of Hit Dice of undead equal to 4 times his Hit Dice; this is calculated separately from any other ability he might have to control undead.

Unfortunately for the wearer, the robe has a will of its own when it comes to slaying and animating others. Anytime the wearer touches another living being, the robe might (10% chance) activate its *finger of death* ability on its own—even if the wielder has already voluntarily used *finger of death* three times that day. Further, the robe might (5% chance) cast *finger of death* at range anytime a living being spends more than 5 minutes within 20 feet of the wearer. Individuals slain under these circumstances also animate as zombies, but they are not under the control of the wearer of the robe. They do not attack him, although they will fight him in self-defense, but they follow him constantly and attack any other living beings they see.

Once donned, the robe can only be removed by a *miracle* or *wish*. *Acererak's robe* can only be destroyed if it is first coated in dust taken from a demilich—some legends maintain that it must be from Acererak himself—and then burned in holy fire, such as that produced by a *flame strike* spell, cast by a 20th-level caster.

Blade of Valgyr

This chaotic evil intelligent blade (Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 16, Ego 20) is a *+4 keen, unholy, wounding bastard sword*. It can cast *detect magic* (see page 219 of the *Player's Handbook*) at will and *darkness* (see page 216 of the *Player's Handbook*) three times per day. It has 10 ranks in Bluff, grants the bearer resistance 10 against fire and cold, and speaks Common, Abyssal, Celestial, and Draconic. The sword is a tainted object and requires the bearer to save against taint each day it remains in his possession. Each day it does not take the life of a lawful good being, the sword bestows a negative level on the wielder. Once the wielder has drawn the sword in battle, he can never draw another weapon, nor get rid of the sword. It appears in his hand at the start of any combat. Only a *miracle* or *wish* frees the bearer.

Exposure to the breath weapons of two dragon great wyrms—one metallic, one chromatic—within a 24-hour span is required to destroy the *Blade of Valgyr*.

Rod of Cas (Ebon Rod of Ill Will)

While it usually remains in the possession of Cas, the moose-headed demigod of spite (see page 19), sometimes this minor artifact temporarily finds its way into the hands of mortals. This antler-headed scepter acts as a Large *+3 vicious heavy mace* that deals both bludgeoning and piercing damage. As soon as an opponent has successfully dealt damage to the wielder, the *ebon rod* instantly acquires the *bane* weapon ability, with its power focused on the type of the creature in question. Thus, if a giant dealt even a single point of damage to the rod's wielder, the *ebon rod* would instantly acquire the *giant bane* ability for all future attacks at that giant. The weapon remembers all those who have struck its wielder and will instantly shift to whatever type of *bane* ability is required to match a given attacker.

The *ebon rod* can never be pulled from its wielder's hand without permission (making the wielder immune to attempts to disarm him of the *ebon rod*), until and unless the wielder's hand is cold and dead. Any enemy of the owner's who picks up the weapon immediately becomes the target of a *phantasmal killer* spell (DC 20 + owner's Cha modifier).

Any attempt to destroy the *rod of Cas* causes it to teleport instantly to Cas, while the person attempting to destroy it receives all the damage dealt to the *ebon rod* in its place.

Strong illusion, necromancy, and transmutation; CL 20th; Weight 16 lb.

Illus. by E. Polak

Monster selection is an integral part of making a horror campaign work. Presented here is some advice on using standard monsters in a more horrific fashion, followed by a wide selection of new monsters. These monsters are designed for a horror-based game but can function equally well in all types of D&D campaigns.

Villains in Horror

Familiarity breeds contempt—an axiom as true for monsters as it is for a baloney sandwich. When players have encountered a frost giant or bone devil or green dragon for the umpteenth time, it can be hard for them to think of the monster as anything other than a set of numbers. Sure, PCs might acknowledge the danger posed by the creature, might even flee if they think they can't beat it, but it's unlikely to inspire fear. They know it too well.

One solution is to use new monsters, and we've provided plenty of those later in this chapter. But it's even more effective to use existing monsters in a new or more horrific way, to undercut everything they thought they knew. What follows is a brief look at the monster types most appropriate for a horror game. This is not a comprehensive list, but with the help of these examples you should be able to unnerve your players with a ghastly throng of monsters or come up with your own bone-chilling creations.

BEYOND GOTHIC

Many people associate fantasy horror with Gothic horror. Dracula, the suave vampire lord. The wolf-man. Frankenstein's monster. The bandage-wrapped mummy who carries an ancient curse. The haunting ghost who cannot find rest until his death is avenged or those who wronged him suffer. These have become archetypes, icons even, because they work. They can make for very effective stories when skillfully used—entire Dungeons & Dragons settings have been based on them—and they serve as shortcuts to a particular mood or aesthetic, a shorthand Dungeon Masters can use to quickly convey the exact type of game they wish to run.

They are also, however, quite familiar to most players, and that familiarity can result in complacency. Furthermore, every one of these classic monsters is relatively modern, dating from the 18th, 19th, or early 20th century. While they can be modified to fit the pseudo-medieval feel of the standard D&D campaign, they aren't naturally at home there. The solution? Try replacing these old standards with alternative, more fantasy-oriented interpretations.

THE VAMPIRE

Vampire myths older than *Dracula* (novel 1897, film 1931) attribute the existence of the undead to sinners and suicides unable to enter Heaven. Consider portraying vampires in a horror campaign in this fashion—the

selfish and desperate who have doomed not only themselves but all those on whom they feed. The vampire lord who became what he is through a bargain with a great fiend or evil god might make an impressive villain, but the self-serving predator with few ambitions beyond survival and the slaking of his unholy lust upon the living is a far more visceral character.

Remember, too, that vampires are predators first and foremost. From the bestial figure covered in grave dirt, barely more than a lowly ghoul, to the cold lord scheming in his castle, vampires are hunters, gluttons, addicts, and sociopaths rolled into one. A vampire's lust for blood is no mere hunger but a profane and burning need that permeates every iota of its being. Modern literature romanticizes vampires into sensual beings whose need for blood is little more than a dietary quirk. Don't hesitate to fall back on older interpretations. Portray vampires in your campaign as rage-filled, murderous beings for whom all other concerns—romance, honor, wealth, power—pale before the all-consuming need to feed.

THE WOLF-MAN

Werewolves (and other lycanthropes) are either/or monsters in D&D. They're nigh-well unstoppable without the proper equipment and spells but fairly mundane if the PCs are ready for them.

Rather than using werewolves as simple monsters, make them villains: the perpetrators of vile crimes and the end-point in a long mystery. Play up the notion that the werewolf in human form has no memory of his actions during the nights of the full moon. The horrific murderer could be the town priest, the kindly old seamstress, the innkeeper, or even one of the PCs. The hidden enemy, who does not himself recognize the danger he poses, can make for a truly horrifying mystery.

Alternatively, consider the lycanthrope as the metaphor for the rage and violence intrinsic to every living being. Suppose lycanthropy isn't a disease at all, but simply the result of suppressed anger in a high-magic area, finally and fatally released. Perhaps all barbarians have the potential of transforming when they go into a rage, especially if they have moderate or severe taint.

FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

When coming up with a D&D equivalent of Frankenstein's monster, it's a bit reductive to translate the creature into a mere flesh golem. After all, in the original novel Frankenstein's monster ("Adam") was highly intelligent and had his own goals and dreams. In the source material, the horror of the monster sprang from the notion of reanimating dead parts to produce new life. In most fantasy, this can be distasteful but not necessarily horrific—or, in some settings, even all that unusual. You might use the cadaver golem (see page 149) to fill a Frankenstein's monster role in a story, but consider instead the following possibility.

The monsters presented in the *Monster Manual* are standard representatives of their type. It's not beyond the scope of the rules for a unique flesh golem to animate with its intelligence and personality intact, and it's a simple matter for the DM to add appropriate skills and feats. The notion of a flesh golem with its own desires—perhaps even with urges from more than one of its component bodies—is disturbing. Suppose that the golem could have a personality deriving from one or more of its component parts, or perhaps even multiple personalities.

Such a golem would be no less bound to follow its creator's orders than the standard nonsentient golem. This poor individual is trapped in a monstrous, unnatural body, unable to refuse the horrific commands of its master. It might hope to be transformed into a less monstrous form, only to find the only possible means of escape is death—or going berserk and causing yet more devastation. Surely death would be a preferable state, but can the heroes justify killing someone who is essentially an innocent victim?

THE MUMMY

Whether it's a mindless, shambling corpse or a spellcasting sorcerer, a mummy is usually the protector of a tomb or the victim of a curse. Either of these scenarios generates a worthwhile horror villain, but consider the possibility of a mummy not bound to a higher power. Perhaps an ancient necromancer chose mummification over lichdom in his bid for immortality. Or a mummy might indeed be cursed but potentially able to escape his eternal imprisonment if he can find another to take his place. The mummy might not even be recognizable as such, once he had shed his outer wrappings to appear as either human or perhaps some form of lesser undead.

For a bizarre twist, consider the possibility that the power animating the mummy is in fact contained in the wrappings. Should even a scrap of the cloth survive the first mummy's destruction, the next creature to touch it might find himself possessed by the ancient's vengeful spirit.

Finally, most mummies were royalty or nobility in life. In a culture that reveres the dead, as most mummifying societies did, what is the result of a dead king returning to life (or at least to animation)? Can he reclaim the throne? And what would life be like under a ruler who neither shares nor remembers the needs and foibles of mortality?

GHOSTS

Most ghosts are driven by rage, hatred, or some other compelling passion that binds them to the mortal world long after death. Finding out what unfinished business holds the ghost, and concluding it, is a tried-and-true way of dealing with these creatures. It might not be easy, but it's the accepted technique.

Consider the possibilities inherent in a ghost that doesn't want its final endeavor completed. Perhaps the ghost has waited so long that it has come to like its undead state, reveling in its power to take the lives of others and torment the living. Not only has it abandoned its purpose, it now seeks to prevent others from learning that purpose and completing it.

Or what of a ghost whose purpose is tied to madness? An insane killer might, after death, retain no greater goal than to continue killing. It possesses mortal after mortal, driving each to commit horrific acts and abandoning him to face the legal and societal consequences.

Perhaps most horrific, what of people with mental disabilities or young children who become ghosts? These poor souls might not know why they remain bound to the material

world or even really understand what has happened to them. The touch of a ghost is often fatal to the living, and a child desperate to return to the warm embrace of friends and family might do far more damage unknowingly than a malignant spirit could accomplish on purpose.

ABERRATIONS

Aberrations are already among the most horrific creatures in the *Monster Manual*. To take full advantage of these alien beings, however, the DM must remember that they are truly alien, perhaps the most inhuman of all monsters. Their actions can seem baseless, because their motives are utterly incomprehensible to the human mind. When using aberrations as villains, don't hesitate to make their schemes incredibly—even ridiculously—convoluted. They can take actions that appear to make no sense, although the actions should relate to their objectives in some fashion. Considering how different aberrations are from humanoids, and their tendency toward evil, it's likely that many of them do not consider humanoids to be sentient beings. Even aberrations that are not overtly evil might not object to harming humans, any more than most humans object to killing a rat.

EXAMPLE: ALIEN MOTIVES

In a horror setting, mind flayers have become as corrupt and decadent as they are evil and scheming. They have focused their development on the powers of the mind for so many generations that they have lost the ability to feel the extremes of physical stimuli. Thus, they turn toward the "lesser" races as sources of sensation.

Imagine the PCs enter an underground cavern. The noise is deafening, the room echoing with endless cries. Across the floor of the cavern, dozens of humanoids engage in an orgy of sex, sadism, self-mutilation, unarmed combat, murder, and every combination of the above. The floor is slick with blood, sweat, and other unpleasant substances; the stench of blood and fear is overpowering. And hovering in the air above the screaming, suffering slaves are three illithids, tentacles writhing in ecstasy as they absorb every thrill of sensation from the hapless crowd of thralls below.

ANIMALS AND VERMIN

Today we think of animals as creatures of instinct rather than embodiments of evil. Many ancient tales, however, attribute a sense of malice to certain night hunters, such as wolves, rats, cats, bats, and spiders. (It is no coincidence that these same creatures are frequently associated with vampires, hags, and other evils.) Something as simple as dropping the rule that all animals be neutral and making some (or all) animals evil can have a major impact on a campaign. For low-level characters, the howling of a wolf in the distance suddenly becomes not scene-setting ambiance but a true sign of danger

You need not make animals evil for them to become scary. A pack of hungry wolves stalking a dark road at night, or a colony of venomous spiders who dwell within the beds and the privy of the local inn, should be enough to frighten low-level PCs. Animals harmless on their own can be controlled by beings more intelligent and more malignant than themselves. The beauty of using animals is that, once you've decided why they've become a threat, they have an overwhelming advantage of numbers; as Hitchcock pointed out in *The Birds*, they're literally everywhere.

EXAMPLE: THE HORDES OF THE WILDERNESS

Players tend to reserve their fear and respect for the larger creatures in the *Monster Manual*. You might find a way to remind the PCs that they give insufficient attention to the smallest. A circle of evil druids, determined to wipe out a town or a full-sized city, could achieve their goal by sending swarms of insects and hordes of smaller animals against the populace. City guards reduced to bloody skeletons by a skittering carpet of centipedes, or children torn apart by *dominated* and maddened birds or squirrels, are horrors the likes of which few PCs have seen.

DRAGONS

Enormous beings with innate magic powers, instinctive greediness, and destructive tendencies, dragons are pretty horrific to begin with. Still, it's worth considering why dragons behave as they do, in order to put a darker spin on their actions.

Like aberrations, dragons are completely inhuman—they're enormous, they're nigh immortal, they're inherently magic, and they're reptiles. It should not be assumed that they think like humanoids. Dragons take the long view, and their motivations might make little sense when viewed with human logic. An evil dragon has no objection to waiting hundreds of years to take revenge for a slight, and is happy to do so by slaying the descendants of the one who wronged him. They might think of humans as nothing more than viable subjects for magical experimentation—an unending source of lab specimens.

Why do dragons covet wealth? Is it simple status among dragonkind? Are riches a component of their mating rituals? Or, to put a darker spin on it, suppose that dragons are not attracted to the *intrinsic* wealth of an item, but to its *perceived* wealth for the owner. Under those circumstances, a dragon is just as likely to slay a destitute beggar for his last copper piece as he is to steal a caravan of gold from a traveling merchant—because that copper piece means everything to the beggar. This twist makes the actions of evil dragons even less predictable, and that means nobody is safe.

EXAMPLE: THE KIDNAPPED PRINCESS

It's a commonplace of fairy tales and old myths: The great beast has kidnapped, or demanded as tribute, a young (and frequently virginal) princess. In some of the tales, the dragon seeks to eat her; in others, his purposes are less than clear. Because it's both a cliché and lacks credibility, princesses rarely appear in stories and games involving dragons anymore.

Consider, then, the possibility that an evil dragon seeks princesses as nothing less than unwilling breeding stock. The dragon intends to create a small force of half-dragon servants and followers and considers only females with the most noble humanoid blood worthy of bearing his children.

Human, elf, and dwarf princesses are all viable candidates, so long as their pedigree is pure. Without outside aid, these poor women are condemned to a life of continual assault and childbearing. After this encounter, your PCs might long for the days of dragons randomly destroying villages and eating prisoners.

FEY

Speaking of fairy tales, consider the fey themselves. In many folktales, the "fair folk" are responsible for stealing children or cursing those who anger them. Even those that are helpful—cleaning houses or protecting travelers—grow angry if their efforts go unrewarded. The fey of your campaign might be less benign and more unpredictable that those of the *Monster Manual*. Dryads demand that their charmed paramours join them in the realm of the fey, there to waste away their youth. Fauns save a drowning child, only to grow angry as the child grows to adulthood and forgets to return regularly and honor the fey who saved him, until finally they retaliate by drowning the woman's child some decades later. The fey of fairy tales, and of a horror-oriented campaign, are not deliberately evil so much as they are innately self-serving and temperamental.

You need not change the assumed nature of the fey in the *Monster Manual* to make them work in a horror game. Perhaps the fey of a wood decide that the only way to protect their home is to drive away the nearby human settlements. Believing that they are acting for the greater good, they do whatever they must to frighten away or even destroy the mortal interlopers.

EXAMPLE: JUST A PRANK

Fey who are not innately good, or who have a different understanding of morality than humans do, might not confine their tricks to mere inconveniences. A group of fey angry at a village might weaken the supports on stairs, crippling or even killing the next person to climb them; release all the town's herd animals, leaving the people short of food; or lure children into the wood or the river where all manner of accidents can happen. The fey might not even intend their pranks to cause harm; they simply do not care whether their actions have consequences for others one way or the other.

GIANTS

Giants are often considered the bruisers of D&D campaigns, great for random encounters, in combat-heavy adventures, or as muscle for other villains. Fairy tales show, however, that giants can be fearsome villains in their own right.

Giants are the ultimate bullies, the incarnation of the strong preying on the weak. The visceral horror of seeing people slain simply because their attacker is strong enough to do so can sometimes be as powerful as more subtle horror techniques.

Worse, giants are predators. In fairy tales and in horror campaigns, people comprise a substantial portion of a giant's diet, meaning that giants are in the same category as other man-eating beasts, such as dragons or purple worms, with the added aspect of the cannibalism taboo. After all, giants look like they're just big people, even if the differences are actually substantial. Somehow, the notion of being eaten by a huge reptile or even by a pack of ghouls (who at least have the curse of undeath as an excuse) seems less disturbing than the idea of being cooked and eaten, possibly with a knife and fork, by what is essentially just a very large person.

EXAMPLE: THE HERD

Humanoids have one advantage over other herd animals—namely, that they can take care of themselves. A giant or tribe of giants might well keep an entire village of humans as nothing more than livestock, allowing the people to farm and to maintain their community but never permitting them to leave or to develop weapons capable of posing a threat. These people live a life of constant terror, knowing full well that at any time a giant could show up and drag several of them off for slaughter.

HUMANOIDS

Orcs, goblins, kobolds, and the like are sometimes the whipping boys of D&D. Any single kobold or gnoll can be a foe as deadly as any human or elf, yet for the most part they are effortlessly swatted by the PCs.

Perhaps the easiest way to make humanoids more horrific is simply to take the notion of the horde to its extreme. No matter how high level the PCs might be, they can only face so many foes before they're out of spells and running low on hit points. Forcing the heroes to find some solution other than direct violence while a tidal wave of kobolds comes down from the mountains can make for some real tension.

This sort of scene is, however, rather large in scale for horror, which is often more effective when kept on the personal level. As a solution, remember that any humanoid with class levels can serve as a villain. Constructing a goblin villain allows you to play up cultural differences. Consider on the one hand a tribal society that tolerates slavery, genocide, the murder of children, and even cannibalism as normal behavior, and then imagine the consequences of even a small population of such beings coming into contact with an isolated human or halfling settlement and the carnage that would ensue.

EXAMPLE: THE STRANGER AMONG US

Consider using humanoids not as the source of horror, but to illustrate the horrors of which all sentient beings are capable. A series of horrible crimes has struck a small town, coinciding with the arrival of a single outcast orc or goblin (or perhaps a family of kobolds). The villagers immediately leap to assumptions regarding the stranger's guilt; after all, everyone knows what "those people" are capable of. A mob is perhaps the most terrifying monster of them all, and the PCs might be forced to choose between allowing the mob to lynch an innocent stranger or possibly harming ordinary townsfolk in order to defend him. Even more troubling, it's entirely possible that the PCs might assume the stranger's guilt has been proven, only to discover afterward that they assisted in the perpetration of a monstrous crime, the lynching of an innocent being—and that the true criminal is still at large.

MONSTROUS HUMANOIDS

Few creatures in D&D personify the corruption and deformation of the human form like monstrous humanoids. Each can be seen to represent an aspect of the darker side of humanity: the reptilian and murderous yuan-ti, the wantonly deadly medusa, the ever-changing and deceptive doppelganger, the childhood nightmares that are the hags, who embody the creeping ravages of age. If aberrations and dragons are frightening because they're not human, and humanoid villains are frightening because they're all too human, then monstrous humanoids combine the worst of both: almost human but very, very *wrong*.

Most monstrous humanoids can pass as human, at least at a distance or in poor lighting. Yet they possess abilities of untold horror, and they are often motivated by sheer malevolence or predatory instinct. A monstrous humanoid might slaughter innocents in the advancement of some convoluted plot or for no better reason than acting out its nature.

EXAMPLE: GRANNY LOVES YOU

A green hag dwells in a shack not far from a quiet village. Using her spell-like abilities, she has taken several of the community's children under her wing, preferring orphans or those whose parents neglect them. Calling them her grandchildren and showering them with false affection, she uses these children to lure other villagers into her clutches, and she slowly grows fat off those she consumes. She molds the children she adopts into violent killers, bereft of morality and ready to turn on their own families or anyone else at her slightest whim.

OUTSIDERS

If fiends are an obvious choice for horror villains. they make up for it by performing so superbly in the role. From the scheming greater devil to the demonic servant summoned by a mad cult—a servant who might possess more free will than his apparent masters realize—creatures from the Lower Planes are a mainstay of horror fantasy. Nor are they mere physical threats: Their ability to possess others makes them far more sinister, and far more subtle, than straightforward marauders.

Unfortunately, it's a danger with which most players are familiar. Consider, therefore, drawing upon a different selection of outsiders to enhance a game's horrific feel. Even good-aligned genies often have inscrutable methods, and evil ones enjoy taking advantage of poor bargains to distort the desires (and *wishes*) of mortals foolish enough to deal with them. PCs forced by circumstances to make bargains with evil entities could find themselves on the run from inevitables (see page 158 of the *Monster Manual*) should they choose to disregard their end of the bargain. Even a good outsider might decide that in a given situation the good of the many outweighs the good of the few—and the PCs might find themselves among the few.

EXAMPLE: THE SINS OF THE FATHER

A parent or ancestor of one of the PCs entered into a binding agreement with a powerful fiend or other outsider—an agreement that bound not only himself but his descendants unto the tenth generation. The PC finds herself forced to choose between serving an exceptionally evil master or violating the agreement and risking the wrath of the inevitables, who are surely aware of any contract made with an entity of such power.

New Monsters

The following creatures are particularly appropriate for horror campaigns but can enhance any D&D game. Remember the innate taint of undead and creatures of the evil subtype (see page 62). Beings who spend more than 24 hours in the presence of a creature with innate taint begin to gain taint, just as though they were within a tainted area.

BANE WRAITH

Medium Undead (Incorporeal)
Hit Dice: 8d12 (52 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 80 ft. (perfect)
Armor Class: 17 (+3 Dex, +4 deflection), touch 17, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/—
Attack: Incorporeal touch +7 melee (1d4 Str *or* Wis drain)
Full Attack: Incorporeal touch +7 melee (1d4 Str *or* Wis drain)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Ability drain, create spawn
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., empathic sense, false substance, incorporeal traits, +4 turn resistance, spell-like abilities, undead traits
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +8
Abilities: Str —, Dex 17, Con —, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18
Skills: Disguise +25, Gather Information +10, Hide +14, Intimidate +15, Listen +13, Search +14, Spot +13, Survival +7 (+9 following tracks)
Feats: Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Surge of Malevolence*
Environment: Any land and underground, particularly urban
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually chaotic, always evil
Advancement: 9–24 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: —

*New feat described on page 124

This individual initially appears normal, albeit livid with rage. Only closer examination reveals that his form is slightly translucent, and that he floats an inch above the earth.

Bane wraiths are incorporeal undead, similar in many respects to wraiths or spectres. They result when someone dies a violent and gruesome death, accompanied by the deaths of his family, friends, and everything he loved and worked for. Bane wraiths develop most frequently, but not exclusively, in or near tainted regions.

A bane wraith's true form is that of a vaguely humanoid mass of sickly gray mists and energies. It usually makes use

of its *disguise self* ability to appear as it did in life, or as someone it is impersonating. Due to the bane wraith's tainted and undead nature, living beings often feel vaguely uneasy around one, but they might not attribute this to the bane wraith itself.

Bane wraiths are roughly human in size and completely weightless. They speak whatever languages they did in life.

COMBAT

Bane wraiths are fearsome opponents, making efficient use of their incorporeal touch to slay or incapacitate their foes. What makes a bane wraith truly alarming, however, is that it rarely attacks its enemies directly. Rather, should a bane wraith grow angry at a living being—and the temperament of these creatures makes them all too easily angered—it prefers instead to hunt down the friends and loved ones of its living foe. A single bane wraith can torment an individual for months or even years, hunting down all those she cares about.

Illus. by Daarken

Bane wraith

Ability Drain (Su): A bane wraith can drain either Strength or Wisdom with a touch. It must decide which ability it is draining before rolling its attack. While the effects of a bane wraith's Strength drain are immediately noticeable, its Wisdom-draining attack is more subtle. If the target does not realize he has been attacked—if, for instance, the bane wraith brushes against him in a crowd, or attacks from concealment—he must make a DC 18 Wisdom check (with his new, reduced Wisdom score) to realize that anything untoward has occurred. If a bane wraith continues to use its Strength drain on a target it has already reduced to 0 Strength, it deals Constitution drain instead.

Create Spawn (Su): Any humanoid slain by a bane wraith becomes a standard wraith in 1d4 rounds. Spawn are under the command of the bane wraith that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life, although they do physically resemble their former selves.

Empathic Sense (Ex): When a bane wraith draws within 30 feet of any sentient being, it immediately and instinctively knows the name and appearance of every one of that individual's friends and loved ones. Furthermore, it gains a general sense of where the individual believes his loved ones to be, although this information might not be accurate. This ability allows no save, but spells or abilities that make the subject immune to mind-reading or telepathy block this power.

False Substance (Ex): A bane wraith looks more solid than most incorporeal creatures. In anything other than direct lighting, observers must make a DC 18 Spot check to notice that a bane wraith is incorporeal.

Incorporeal Traits: A bane wraith is harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, magic weapons, spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities. It has a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source, except for force effects or attacks made with *ghost touch* weapons. It can pass through solid objects, but not force effects, at will. Its attacks ignore natural armor, armor, and shields, but deflection bonuses and force effects work normally against it. An incorporeal creature always moves silently and cannot be heard with Listen checks if it doesn't wish to be. See page 310 of the *Monster Manual* for full information on the incorporeal subtype.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 16), *disguise self* (+10 bonus on Disguise checks already calculated into skill totals, above). Caster level 8th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Undead Traits: A bane wraith is immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities, poison, magical sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to extra damage from critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be *raised*, and *resurrection* works only if it is willing. It has darkvision out to 60 feet.

BLOODROT

Medium Undead
Hit Dice: 10d12 (65 hp)
Initiative: –5
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft.
Armor Class: 5 (–5 Dex), touch 5, flat-footed 5
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+8
Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d6+4 plus blood fever)
Full Attack: Slam +8 melee (1d6+4 plus blood fever)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Blood fever, constrict 1d6+4, improved grab, sanguineous mount
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., damage reduction 5/—, immunities, split, track infected, undead traits
Saves: Fort +3, Ref –2, Will +2
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 1, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 14
Skills: Climb +11
Feats: —
Environment: Underground or urban

Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 11–20 HD (Medium); 21–30 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

What appears to be a large pool of slick, dark blood with patches of more viscous fluids, suddenly surges forward like a slug.

A bloodrot is an oozelike undead. While sages originally believed that bloodrots were slain oozes animated by necromantic spells, they have now come to understand that the bloodrot is not a true ooze at all, despite its oozelike form. Rather, a bloodrot is formed from the remaining fluids of a creature dissolved in acid or otherwise liquefied. Bloodrots have no goal save to consume the fluids of the living, whom they dissolve with their blood fever ability.

Most bloodrots have a diameter of roughly 8 feet and a thickness of 2 to 6 inches. A typical specimen weighs about 400 pounds.

COMBAT

A bloodrot attacks with pseudopods of its own substance, often striking at a surprising distance. While unintelligent, it possesses an instinctive cunning that enables it to recognize advantageous circumstances for attack—or for retreat if a fight turns against it. A bloodrot prefers to kill its prey immediately after infecting them, so as to enjoy a meal then and there, but if it appears to be losing a battle it retreats and tracks those whom it has infected to consume later.

Blood Fever (Su): Supernatural disease—slam (or any physical contact, including grappling or striking a bloodrot with unarmed attacks), Fortitude DC 17, incubation period 1 minute, damage 1d6 Con and 1d4 Cha. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Unlike normal diseases, blood fever continues until the creature reaches 0 Constitution (and dies) or is cured. Blood fever is a powerful curse, not a natural disease. A character attempting to cast any conjuration (healing) spell on a creature afflicted with blood fever must succeed on a DC 20 caster level check, or the spell has no effect.

To eliminate blood fever, the curse must first be broken with *break enchantment* or *remove curse* (requiring a DC 20 caster level check for either spell), after which a caster level check is no longer necessary to cast healing spells on the creature, and the blood fever can be magically cured as any normal disease.

An afflicted creature who dies of blood fever—or who dies of any other cause while infected with blood fever—dissolves into a puddle of thick blood and liquefied flesh and organs. A bloodrot feeds on these remains.

Constrict (Ex): A bloodrot deals automatic slam damage with a successful grapple check, in addition to possibly infecting the target with blood fever.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a bloodrot must hit with a slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. Creatures who have not already contracted blood fever must make a new save every round while grappled to avoid contracting the disease.

Sanguineous Mount (Su): If a bloodrot is losing a battle, it might attempt to hide within the body of anyone already infected with blood fever. The bloodrot need merely touch someone it has already infected, and it can then seep into his body. The individual can resist this invasion with a DC 17 Fortitude save. Failure on the save means the bloodrot occupies the target's bloodstream, and the target is nauseated as long as the bloodrot remains within him. The bloodrot can be expelled through the use of *remove disease* or *heal*, if the caster succeeds on a DC 20 caster level check. Otherwise, it can remain for up to 24 hours before it must depart, gushing forth from the host's various orifices.

Split (Ex): Slashing and piercing weapons deal no damage to a bloodrot. Instead, the creature splits into two identical bloodrots, each with half of the original's current hit points (round down). A bloodrot with 10 or fewer hit points cannot be further split and dies if reduced to 0 hit points. Splitting only occurs if an attack would deal actual damage; blows that are completely nullified by a bloodrot's damage reduction do not cause it to split.

Track Infected (Su): A bloodrot can sense the distance and direction to anyone currently infected with blood

Bloodrot

Illus. by Daarken

fever, so long as he is within a number of miles equal to the bloodrot's Hit Dice and not within an *antimagic field* or similar effect.

Skills: A bloodrot has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

BOG IMP

Small Fey (Aquatic)
Hit Dice: 4d6+8 (22 hp)
Initiative: +9
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 60 ft., swim 30 ft. (but see text)
Armor Class: 18 (+1 size, +5 Dex, +2 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/–3
Attack: Claw +8 melee (1d3–1 plus sicken)
Full Attack: 2 claws +8 melee (1d3–1 plus sicken)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Sicken, sink, stagnate
Special Qualities: Amphibious, code of law, damage reduction 5/cold iron, immunity to acid, paralysis, poison, and sleep, low-light vision, liquid burrow, resistant to mind-effects
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +6*
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 21, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 12
Skills: Hide +16*, Listen +11, Move Silently +12, Search +10, Spot +11, Survival +9, Swim +14
Feats: Ability Focus (sink)[B], Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse
Environment: Any swamp
Organization: Solitary or clutch (2–6)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: 1/10th coins, 50% goods, 50% items
Alignment: Always lawful evil
Advancement: 5–12 HD (Small)
Level Adjustment: +5

A small humanoid creature rises from the stagnant waters of the swamp. Naked save for the moss and leaves that cling to its splotchy green skin, it has spindly, pointed ears. Its eyes gleam, and its grin displays broken teeth as swamp water trickles from its mouth.

Bog imp

Illus. by W. England

Bog imps—no relation to fiendish imps—are small, swamp-dwelling fey who torment anyone who passes through their territory. They are cruel, malicious creatures, eager to cause suffering and death to trespassers. Strangely enough, however, various clutches (extended families) of bog imps each have their own code of laws, a system of honor that they are psychologically incapable of breaking. This system varies from clutch to clutch and from swamp to swamp. For instance, one family of bog imps might leave a group of travelers alone if the passersby are willing to risk one of their number in a game of wits or in a race over treacherous terrain with one of the bog imps. A different clutch might allow anyone to pass if he can guess their family name. Still others—those who began their lives as elves (see below)—might instinctively recognize any other elf from their home community, and allow him to pass. Bog imps are loath to reveal their laws and codes, and knowledge of how to win past one group offers no safety from another.

Bog imps stand about 2 feet tall and weigh about 20 pounds. They speak Common and Sylvan; roughly half of them also speak passable Elven.

COMBAT

Bog imps are not powerful combatants and so prefer to avoid direct confrontation. Their favored tactic is to use their sink ability on all enemies, ganging up on those who manage to resist. They will flee if overpowered and, if defeated, might offer to guide the passersby through the swamp in exchange for their lives.

Sicken (Ex): Anyone struck by a bog imp's claw attack must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or be sickened for 2d4 minutes. Failure on more than one save does not stack, but it does extend the duration of the sickening. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Sink (Su): A bog imp can, with a simple glance, cause anyone standing on or in water, mud, or any other nonsolid surface to sink. This ability functions within 60 feet. A successful DC 15 Will save negates the attack and renders the target immune to the sink attack of that particular bog imp for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

If the save fails, the target is dragged beneath the surface by a spectral force; this takes 1 full round, plus 1 additional round per point of the target's Strength bonus, if any. Once beneath the surface, the target is subject to drowning (standard drowning rules apply). A target can be rescued if aided by another who succeeds on a DC 30 Strength check, but this simply begins the process over again. The effect ends instantly if the bog imp is slain, if the target is placed on solid stone or lifted 5 feet or more above the surface of the bog, or if the target moves out of range (more than 60 feet away from the bog imp).

If an elf (and only an elf) drowns in this manner, he does not truly die. Rather, he remains in a form of stasis beneath the swamp, pickling and shriveling over the course of thirteen days. When that period ends, the elf becomes a new bog imp. He has an instinctive understanding of the laws of

his clutch and a lawful evil alignment. He remembers little, if anything, of his past life.

Stagnate (Su): Any nonmagical liquids that come within 60 feet of a bog imp immediately stagnate. This effect renders water, wine, milk, and other liquids nonpotable; anyone who drinks them must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1d3 hours. This ability has no effect on potions. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Amphibious (Ex): Bog imps can survive comfortably on land or in water.

Code of Law (Ex): Every clutch of bog imps has a code of behavior they must follow. A bog imp who violates that code of law cannot use its sink ability and it loses its immunities and resistances.

Liquid Burrow (Ex): When moving through stagnant, slime-filled water or other liquids more viscous than clear water, a bog imp can use its burrow speed in place of its swim speed.

Saves: Bog imps have a +4 racial bonus on saves against mind-affecting spells and abilities. (This bonus is not included in the saving throw modifiers given above.)

Skills: Bog imps have a +2 racial bonus on Listen, Search, and Spot checks. A bog imp has a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks made in its home environment and on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

BONELEAF

Large Aberration
Hit Dice: 7d8+42 (73 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 10 ft. (6 squares), burrow 10 ft. (soft earth and soil only)
Armor Class: 19 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+16
Attack: Slam +11 melee (2d4+7 plus 1d4) or tendril +11 melee (improved grab and constrict)
Full Attack: 2 slams +11 melee (2d4+7 plus 1d4), or 2 tendrils +11 melee (improved grab and constrict), or slam +11 melee (2d4+7 plus 1d4) and tendril +11 melee (improved grab and constrict)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. with tendril)
Special Attacks: Constrict (2d4+7 plus 1d4), improved grab, razor leaves
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., illusory lure, low-light vision, pervasive sentience, plantlike traits
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +8
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 15, Con 22, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 12
Skills: Hide –1*, Listen +4, Spot +4, Survival +6
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack
Environment: Temperate forest or marsh
Organization: Solitary, but see text
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: 1/10th coins; 50% goods; 50% items
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 8–14 HD (Large); 15–21 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: —

Boneleaf

In the midst of the swamp stands a copse of plants that look like small trees and stiff vines. The leaves appear pale but otherwise normal at first glance; closer inspection reveals their color to be off-white with a green tint. The vines writhe gently, even though no wind blows.

The boneleaf is a large, predatory creature that lurks in the midst of thick vegetation. Although it can easily be mistaken for a plant—and often has been, even by the wisest sages—it is in fact an aberration. This becomes more clear upon examination of a dead boneleaf; blood vessels and strings of cartilage make up the interior of what appear as vines and trees, and a large system of nerves runs beneath the earth where roots should be, connecting all parts of the boneleaf not only to one another but to other boneleaves in the area. Boneleaves feed on the blood they draw with their razor leaves on a slam or constricting attack, as well as by drawing nutrients from the soil as true plants do. They prefer the taste of decomposing sentient creatures to all other prey. Although boneleaves are not particularly clever, they are quite cunning and capable of adapting to tactics and abilities that have been used against them.

Boneleaves understand Common and Sylvan. They are not equipped to speak it normally but might do so briefly through their illusory lure ability.

COMBAT

Big, slow, and not particularly bright, boneleaves prefer to have their prey come to them. Using their innocuous appearance and illusory lure abilities, they entice creatures to come within reach, then they attack and keep attacking until they have killed their prey. A boneleaf losing an encounter attempts to flee by burrowing—an odd sight, in which a dozen small trees and fronds vanish into the earth as though yanked from below.

Illus. by E. Polak

Illus. by W. England

Constrict (Ex): A boneleaf deals automatic constricting damage on a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a boneleaf must hit with a tendril attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Razor Leaves (Ex): The off-white leaves of a boneleaf are surprisingly tough and razor-sharp. It is these leaves that do the extra 1d4 points of damage given above on slam and constrict attacks. This extra damage is considered slashing damage.

Illusory Lure (Su): A boneleaf can generate detailed but short-lived illusions, designed to lure prey into its reach. These usually take the form of something valuable lying among the trunks or of an injured individual crying for aid. This ability functions as the spell *major image* (PH page 252; 7th-level caster), except that this illusion lasts for only 1d6+1 rounds and the boneleaf must wait 1d4 rounds before using the ability again. Interaction with the illusion allows a DC 14 Will save to disbelieve. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Pervasive Sentience (Ex): A boneleaf functions as an independent creature, but it is only a portion of a much larger whole. While boneleaves are encountered singly, they are not actually alone. If boneleaves are present in a given area, there are always 1d6+6 of them in the region. They are considered solitary creatures because each boneleaf in the group remains anywhere from 100 yards to a mile away from its nearest fellow. All the boneleaves in a group are in fact portions of the same creature, connected by miles of underground nerves. Anything one boneleaf experiences is known to all of them, so characters who encounter a second boneleaf after defeating the first will find it anticipates their tactics and abilities.

Plantlike Traits: Although a boneleaf is not a plant, it has many traits also possessed by plants. A boneleaf is immune to magical sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, and mind-affecting spells and abilities (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects). It has some fortification against critical hits; 50% of all critical hits function as normal strikes.

Boneleaves so closely resemble plants that a character must make a DC 15 Spot check to realize the boneleaf is anything more than a normal copse; failure indicates the character comes close enough for the creature to attack with its extended reach before he suspects anything is amiss.

Skills: *Boneleaves have a +12 racial bonus on Hide checks made in forested or overgrown areas.

CORRUPTION EATER

Medium Aberration
Hit Dice: 15d8+60 (127 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)
AC: 21 (+5 Dex, +6 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +11/+16
Attack: Bite +11 melee (1d8+10/19–20 and devour corruption)†
Full Attack: Bite +11 melee (1d8+10/19–20 and devour corruption) and 2 tentacle rakes +6 melee (1d6+7)†
Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft. (tentacles)
Special Attacks: Devour corruption, tainted exhalation, rend 2d4+7
Special Qualities: Corruption scent, damage reduction 10/good, purity vulnerability
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +11
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 20, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills: Hide +14, Jump +31, Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Spot +11
Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Power Attack
Environment: Temperate hills
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: 16–30 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: —
†Includes adjustments for Power Attack feat.

Corruption eater

This creature is a hunched, emaciated humanoid. Its hairless head boasts an overlarge jaw bristling with needle-sharp teeth. Out of its mouth snakes a long tongue studded with small, toothed orifices. The creature's arms are rubbery and serpentine, ending in pads covered with hooked barbs.

Corruption eaters, although they resemble ghouls and similar undead creatures, are living aberrations that feed, as their name suggests, on the taint of other living beings. A battle with a corruption eater can thus be a mixed blessing: Characters hampered by corruption find their burden eased by the corruption eater's attacks, but the corruption eater itself waxes stronger as it feeds. Characters who have embraced their taint and based powers on it might find themselves losing spells or class features as the creature devours their corruption.

COMBAT

A corruption eater wades into melee against tainted characters, targeting its bite attack on the opponent with the highest corruption score while using its tentacles to attack untainted opponents. When using its bite attack, it opens its jaws wider than a mouth of that

size should be able to open. As it pulls back from biting a target, the tiny mouths that cover its long tongue seem to draw little bits of black smoke from the target.

A corruption eater prefers to fight using its Power Attack feat, typically taking a –5 penalty on its attack rolls and gaining a +5 bonus on damage rolls. When not using its Power Attack feat, its bite attack increases to +16 and its tentacle rakes to +11, while its bite damage decreases to 1d8+5 and its tentacle rake damage to 1d6+2.

Devour Corruption (Ex): When a corruption eater hits a character with its bite attack, it draws corruption from the target's body and feeds upon it. The target's corruption score is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 0). Such a small taste of corruption nevertheless provides great nourishment to the creature. Each point of corruption it devours in this way gives it a +1 bonus on attack rolls, saving throws, and damage rolls with later attacks, and also gives the creature 5 temporary hit points. These benefits last for 1 hour.

If a corruption eater bites a character with no corruption, it deals normal damage to the target but at the same time takes 5 points of damage itself.

Tainted Exhalation (Su): Anytime a corruption eater has enough temporary hit points to bring its hit point total above its normal maximum, it can exhale a choking cloud of taint in a 15-foot cone. Creatures within this cone take 1d6 points of damage per point of corruption it has devoured in the last hour and have their depravity scores increased by 1. A successful DC 19 Will save reduces the damage by half and negates the depravity increase. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Rend (Ex): If a corruption eater hits with both tentacle rake attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d4+7 points of damage.

Corruption Scent (Ex): A corruption eater can detect corruption in other creatures. With regard to creatures that have at least mild corruption, it effectively has the scent ability (see page 314 of the *Monster Manual*). It has no ability to detect creatures who are free from corruption. When it is within 30 feet of creatures with corruption, it automatically knows which creature has the highest corruption score.

Purity Vulnerability: Creatures who are entirely free from both corruption and depravity automatically overcome a corruption eater's damage reduction.

ELEMENTAL, TAINT

A mass of seething gray rot and corruption, roughly humanoid in shape, surges from the earth. It looms overhead, giving off a reek of decay.

A taint elemental is a being of pure corruption. It consists of nothing but taint congealed into a semisolid mass of primal evil. An entity of malicious rage, it delights in slaying or corrupting any living beings that cross its path. Occasionally a taint

	Taint Elemental, Small Small Elemental (Evil)	Taint Elemental, Medium Medium Elemental (Evil)	Taint Elemental, Large Large Elemental (Evil)
Hit Dice:	2d8+4 (13 hp)	4d8+16 (34 hp)	8d8+40 (76 hp)
Initiative:	+0	+1	+2
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)	30 ft. (6 squares)	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class:	17 (+1 size, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17	19 (+1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18	20 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +9 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 18
Base Attack/Grapple:	+1/–1	+3/+6	+6/+15
Attack:	Slam +4 melee (1d6+3 plus taint)	Slam +6 melee (1d8+4 plus taint)	Slam +10 melee (2d8+7 plus taint)
Full Attack:	Slam +4 melee (1d6+3 plus taint)	Slam +6 melee (1d8+4 plus taint)	2 slams +10 melee (2d8+7 plus taint)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft. 10 ft./10 ft.	
Special Attacks:	Touch of taint	Touch of taint	Touch of taint
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, elemental traits, excessive taint	Darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, elemental traits, excessive taint	Damage reduction 5/—, darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, elemental traits, excessive taint
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +2	Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +3	Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +4
Abilities:	Str 14, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 15	Str 16, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 15	Str 20, Dex 14, Con 21, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills:	Listen +7, Spot +7	Listen +9, Spot +9	Hide +5, Listen +13, Move Silently +6, Spot +13
Feats:	Power Attack, Surge of Malevolence[B]*	Cleave, Power Attack, Surge of Malevolence[B]*	Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Surge of Malevolence[B]*
Environment:	Any tainted region	Any tainted region	Any tainted region
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	3	5	7
Treasure:	None	None	None
Alignment:	Usually chaotic, always evil	Usually chaotic, always evil	Usually chaotic, always evil
Advancement:	3 HD (Small)	5–7 HD (Medium)	9–15 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment:	—	—	—

*New feat described on page 124.

	Taint Elemental, Huge Huge Elemental (Evil)	Taint Elemental, Greater Huge Elemental (Evil)	Taint Elemental, Elder Huge Elemental (Evil)
Hit Dice:	16d8+96 (168 hp)	21d8+126 (220 hp)	24d8+144 (252 hp)
Initiative:	+4	+5	+6
Speed:	40 ft. (8 squares)	40 ft. (8 squares)	40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class:	21 (–2 size, +4 Dex, +9 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 17	22 (–2 size, +5 Dex, +9 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 17	23 (–2 size, +6 Dex, +9 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple:	+12/+27	+15/+31	+18/+35
Attack:	Slam +17 melee (2d10+10 plus taint)	Slam +23 melee (2d10+12 plus taint)	Slam +27 melee (2d10+13 plus taint)
Full Attack:	2 slams +17 melee (2d10+10 plus taint)	2 slams +21$ melee (2d10+12 plus taint)	2 slams +27 melee (2d10+13 plus taint)
Space/Reach:	15 ft./15 ft.	15 ft./15 ft.	15 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks:	Touch of taint	Touch of taint	Touch of taint
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 5/—, darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, elemental traits, excessive taint	Damage reduction 10/—, darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, elemental traits, excessive taint	Damage reduction 10/—, darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, elemental traits, excessive taint
Saves:	Fort +16, Ref +9, Will +9	Fort +18, Ref +14, Will +11	Fort +20, Ref +16, Will +12
Abilities:	Str 24, Dex 18, Con 23, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15	Str 26, Dex 20, Con 23, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15	Str 28, Dex 22, Con 23, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills:	Hide +10, Listen +23, Move Silently +9, Spot +23	Hide +13, Listen +26, Move Silently +13, Spot +26, Survival +26	Hide +25, Listen +29, Move Silently +33, Spot +29, Survival +29
Feats:	Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Surge of Malevolence[B*]	Alertness, Cleave, Debilitating Strike*, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Surge of Malevolence[B*]	Alertness, Cleave, Debilitating Strike, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Surge of Malevolence[B*]
Environment:	Any tainted region	Any tainted region	Any tainted region
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	9	11	13
Treasure:	None	None	None
Alignment:	Usually chaotic, always evil	Usually chaotic, always evil	Usually chaotic, always evil
Advancement:	17–20 HD (Huge)	22–23 HD (Huge)	25–48 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment:	—	—	—

*New feat described on page 124.

Illus. by E. Polak

Taint elemental

elemental can be found serving more powerful evil entities; it gains nothing from this save the joy of spreading suffering and corruption.

While the creature is not a true elemental, since it does not consist of one of the four elements, it has all the traits and characteristics of an elemental. Taint elementals usually manifest within tainted areas, but they occasionally appear from the corpses of recently slain tainted creatures. (This sight can cause observers to conclude, incorrectly, that they are some form of undead.)

Taint elementals sometimes take on a vaguely humanoid shape, but their forms are constantly in flux, flowing like a viscous liquid. They radiate the stench of rot, and a cold chill is felt in the soul of all those around them. They speak a variant of Abyssal.

COMBAT

Taint elementals are sadistic opponents. They are fond of ambushes and sneak attacks. While they do not hesitate to kill, they also enjoy corrupting targets with large amounts of taint and then leaving them to suffer.

A taint elemental tends not to use its Power Attack feat on the first few attacks, instead calling it into play once it is certain that it has a good chance to hit its chosen target(s).

Touch of Taint (Ex): Anyone struck by a taint elemental, or who physically touches a taint elemental, must succeed on a Fortitude save or gain corruption points. The DC of the save, and the amount of taint gained, is as follows. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Elemental	Save DC	Corruption Gained
Small	13	1
Medium	14	1
Large	16	1d2
Huge	20	1d3
Greater	22	1d4
Elder	24	1d6

Dimension Door (Sp): 3/day. A taint elemental can, by spreading its tainted essence into the environment and instantly reforming at another point, duplicate the effects of *dimension door* spell (*PH* page 221). Doing this is a move-equivalent action. Unlike the *dimension door* spell, the elemental is permitted to take an action immediately afterward if it has any remaining in the round.

Elemental Traits: A taint elemental has immunity to poison, magical sleep effects, paralysis, and stunning. It is not subject to critical hits or flanking. It cannot be *raised*, *reincarnated*, or *resurrected* (although a *limited wish*, *wish*, *miracle*, or *true resurrection* spell can restore life).

Excessive Taint (Ex): A taint elemental has both corruption and depravity scores equal to its HD. It takes no ill effects from taint.

GIANT, DUSK

Least Dusk Giant
Medium Giant
Hit Dice: 6d8+24 (51 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class: 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+9
Attack: Claw +5 melee (1d4+9) or greatclub +5 melee (1d10+15)†
Full Attack: 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+9) and bite +3 melee (1d4+6) or greatclub +5 melee (1d10+15)†
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Cannibalize, rend 2d4+7
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, pall of twilight
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills: Climb +14, Intimidate +11, Listen +11, Spot +11
Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack
Environment: Cold, temperate, and warm mountains and plains
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: 7–11 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: —
†Includes adjustments for Power Attack feat.

Lesser Dusk Giant
Large Giant
Hit Dice: 12d8+84 (138 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 20 (–1 size, +11 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+25
Attack: Claw +11 melee (1d6+21) or large greatclub +11 melee (2d8+36)†
Full Attack: 2 claws +11 melee (1d6+21) and bite +9 melee (1d6+15) or large greatclub +11/+6 melee (2d8+36) or rock +1 ranged (2d6+21)†
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Cannibalize, rend 2d6+18, rock throwing, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, pall of twilight, rock catching
Saves: Fort +15, Ref +4, Will +8
Abilities: Str 34, Dex 11, Con 25, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16
Skills: Climb +27, Intimidate +18, Listen +17, Spot +17
Feats: Cleave, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack
Environment: Cold, temperate, and warm mountains and plains
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 9
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: 13–17 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —
†Includes adjustments for Power Attack feat.

Greater Dusk Giant
Huge Giant
Hit Dice: 18d8+198 (279 hp)
Initiative: –1
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 25 (–2 size, +17 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 25
Base Attack/Grapple: +13/+40
Attack: Claw +17 melee (1d8+32) or huge greatclub +17 melee (3d8+28)†
Full Attack: 2 claws +17 melee (1d8+32) and bite +15 melee (1d8+22) or huge greatclub +17/+12/+7 melee (3d8+54) or rock –2 ranged (2d8+32)†
Space/Reach: 15 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Cannibalize, rend 2d8+27, rock throwing, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, pall of twilight, rock catching
Saves: Fort +22, Ref +5, Will +10
Abilities: Str 48, Dex 9, Con 32, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 18
Skills: Climb +40, Intimidate +25, Listen +23, Spot +23
Feats: Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack

Environment: Cold, temperate, and warm mountains and plains
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 14
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: 18–24 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: —
†Includes adjustments for Power Attack feat.

This creature, which stands roughly 9 feet in height, seems to be either a more evolved troll or a bestial giant. Its arms hang low, and end in vicious talons; its jaw, although not as distended as a troll's, is long and filled with jagged teeth. Its flesh is the dull tan of a weather-beaten human's, however, and its eyes gleam with a malicious intelligence.

Dusk giants are predatory cousins of true giants, almost as closely related to trolls as to frost or fire giants. Dusk giants prefer to hunt during the late hours of the day, when the shadows are long and their prey is beginning to tire. Ruthless hunters, dusk giants prefer their natural weapons but are quite intelligent and capable of making all manner of complex plans. They lurk on the outskirts of humanoid civilizations, since their semimystical biology requires them to consume the flesh of intelligent beings on a regular basis.

Dusk giants wield weapons when they must, but they rarely focus on them, as their shifting size (see below) makes it difficult to use any one particular weapon constantly. They dress in loose robes and cloths, which are easily shed and replaced. Dusk giants view all other creatures as either prey to devour or hazards to be avoided. They ally with other races when they believe doing so will offer them greater opportunities to feed than going it alone.

The three categories presented here—the least, lesser, and greater dusk giant—do not represent different subraces, but rather three different states through which the same giant can pass again and again during its life. A least dusk giant (Medium) is roughly the size of a large, abnormally bulky human somewhat over 6 feet in height and weighing 300 to 400 pounds, but these figures both increase as it gains Hit Dice, even before it officially changes size. A lesser dusk giant (Large) begins at around 9 to 10 feet in height and weighs roughly 600 pounds. A greater dusk giant (Huge) begins at roughly 15 feet in height and roughly 4,000 pounds but can grow as large as 20 feet and roughly 12,000 pounds.

Dusk giants speak Common, Giant, and any two other languages common to the region in which they live. (Dwarven, Elven, Goblin, and Orc are all favorites.)

Illus. by S. Prescott

Dusk giant

COMBAT

In their least stage, dusk giants prefer to attack from surprise or ambush, since they fear being trapped in face-to-face combat with a stronger opponent. With a hood shadowing its face and its clawed hands concealed, a least dusk giant can briefly pass as human or half-orc, which aids it in drawing closer to unsuspecting prey. As they grow larger, however, or when facing an obviously weaker foe, dusk giants are straightforward opponents. They prefer to weaken foes from a distance with their spell-like abilities (if they have them), then close in and finish them off.

A dusk giant generally prefers to fight using its Power Attack feat. When not using its Power Attack feat, a least dusk giant's claw and greatclub attacks increase to +9 and its bite attack to +7. Its claw damage decreases to 1d4+5, its bite damage to 1d4+2, and its greatclub damage to 1d10+7.

When not using its Power Attack feat, a lesser dusk giant's claw attack increases to +20, its greatclub attack increases to +20/+15, its bite attack increases to +18, and its hurled rock attack increases to +10. Its claw damage decreases to 1d6+12, its bite damage to 1d6+6, its greatclub damage to 2d8+18, and its hurled rock damage to 2d6+12.

When not using its Power Attack feat, a greater dusk giant's claw attack increases to +30, its greatclub attack increases to +30/+25/+20, its bite attack increases to +28, and its hurled rock attack increases to +11. Its claw damage decreases to 1d8+19, its bite damage to 1d8+9, its greatclub damage to 3d8+28, and its hurled rock damage to 2d8+19.

Cannibalize (Ex): Dusk giants gain power—Strength, Constitution, even size and mystical abilities—by consuming other creatures. For every 5 Hit Dice of sentient (Intelligence 3+) living creatures or every 20 Hit Dice of nonsentient living creatures that a dusk giant consumes, it gains 1 Hit Die. These additional Hit Dice grant the dusk giant the following special benefit:

- With every additional Hit Die, the dusk giant gains +1 Strength.
- With every 2 additional Hit Dice, the dusk giant gains +1 Constitution and +1 natural armor.

This special benefit is in addition to the benefit the dusk giant gains when changing category (least to lesser, lesser to greater), to the benefit all creatures gain when increasing in size, and the standard benefit for increasing Hit Dice (extra hit points, improved base attack bonus and saves, and additional feats). All these changes have already been taken into account in the stats for different dusk giant categories presented above.

When a least dusk giant's Hit Dice reach 12, it becomes a lesser dusk giant. Its size increases from Medium to Large (with the usual size adjustments; see page 314 of the *Monster Manual*), it grows stronger of purpose and will (represented in an increase to Charisma), and it gains several potent new abilities. A similar advancement occurs at 18 Hit Dice, when a lesser dusk giant becomes a greater dusk giant and its size increases from Large to Huge. Dusk giants never grow larger than Huge, but they can continue to gain Hit Dice, and the benefit that comes with them, to a maximum of 24 Hit Dice.

Unfortunately for the giant, these gains are not permanent. A dusk giant must continue to consume the flesh of other creatures to maintain its current status. For every day that passes in which a dusk giant does not consume at least 2 Hit Dice worth of sentient creatures, or 8 Hit Dice-worth of nonsentient creatures, its own Hit Dice decrease by 1, with a corresponding loss of all associated benefits. Thus, even the most potent greater giant can weaken and revert to a least giant in times of hardship. Dusk giants hate being weak, and losing Hit Dice is a painful process to them, so they do whatever they must to avoid this circumstance. They cannot weaken beyond 6 Hit Dice; any further starvation beyond that follows normal starvation rules.

Note that the stats presented here represent the weakest form of dusk giant in each given category.

Rend (Ex): If a dusk giant hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto its target's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals extra damage equal to two claw attacks plus 1-1/2 times the giant's Strength modifier.

Rock Throwing (Ex): A lesser dusk giant can hurl rocks weighing 40 to 50 pounds each (Small objects), and a greater dusk giant can hurl rocks of 60 to 80 pounds (Medium objects) out to a distance of up to five range increments. A dusk giant has a +1 racial bonus on attack rolls when throwing rocks. The range increment for a lesser dusk giant's thrown rocks is 120 feet, or 140 feet for a greater dusk giant.

Pall of Twilight (Su): A dusk giant is constantly surrounded by an aura of gloom that darkens bright light and casts an equal pallor upon the spirits of its enemies. In a 10-foot radius around a least dusk giant, bright light is treated as shadowy illumination, although creatures with low-light vision (or darkvision) suffer no penalties in this area. In addition, enemies within this area take a –2 penalty on all saving throws because of the despair it elicits.

The radius of a dusk giant's pall of twilight expands as it grows. A lesser dusk giant's aura has a radius of 20 feet, and a greater dusk giant's aura has a 30-foot radius.

Rock Catching (Ex): A lesser dusk giant or a greater dusk giant can catch Small, Medium, or Large rocks (or projectiles of similar shape). Once per round, if the giant would normally be hit by a rock, it can make a Reflex save to catch the rock as a free action. The DC is 15 for a Small rock, 20 for a Medium one, and 25 for a Large one. (If the projectile provides a magical bonus on attack rolls, the DC increases by that amount.) The giant must be ready for and aware of the attack in order to make a rock catching attempt.

Spell-Like Abilities: Caster level equals the dusk giant's current Hit Dice total. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Lesser dusk giant: 1/day—*enervation, ray of enfeeblement.*

Greater dusk giant: 1/day—*dimension door, energy drain* (DC 23); 2/day—*shield, slow* (DC 17); 3/day—*enervation, ray of enfeeblement.*

GOLEM, CADAVER

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 10d10+30 (85 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class: 20 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +10 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 19
Base Attack/Grapple: +7/16
Attack: Slam +11 melee (2d8+5) or large bastard sword +11 melee (2d8+7)
Full Attack: 2 slams +11 melee (2d8+5) or large bastard sword +11/+6 melee (2d8+7)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: See below
Special Qualities: Assimilate flesh, construct traits, damage reduction 5/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 13, Con —, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 10
Skills: Cadaver golems' skills not only vary from golem to golem, but the skill ranks of a specific golem change as the golem assimilates new body parts. A standard cadaver golem (Int 12) has 39 skill points. *Sample skill set:* Jump +12, Hide +8, Intimidate +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +7
Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Sunder, Power Attack
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: 50% coins; no goods; 1/10th items
Alignment: Always neutral or chaotic, usually evil
Advancement: 11–20 HD (Large); 21–30 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: —

A humanoid form, but far larger than any human, shambles forward. It smells faintly of decay and appears to be stitched together from the remains of multiple bodies. A malevolent intelligence burns in its eyes, and it surveys the area with remarkable intensity.

The so-called cadaver golem is easily mistaken for a standard flesh golem, but it is more intelligent—indeed, sentient—and far more dangerous. Capable of making use of the skills and abilities of those who contributed to its body, the cadaver golem constantly seeks out humanoids who boast talents that it wishes to possess.

The first cadaver golem is believed to have been the result of a mistake during the creation of a flesh golem.

They usually wear whatever clothes they can find or steal that will fit their massive forms. A cadaver golem stands 8 feet tall and weighs around 500 pounds. They speak Common and any other single language, depending on race and region, and they can learn other languages in the course of their existence.

COMBAT

Cadaver golems do not hesitate to destroy anyone or anything that threatens them or stands between them and their goals. Some develop ambitions for power or wealth, while others simply wish to be left alone. All are murderous. Cadaver golems seek out humanoids who possess abilities they want in order to kill their targets and steal those abilities.

A cadaver golem tends not to use its Power Attack feat on the first few attacks, instead calling it into play once it is certain that it has a good chance to hit its chosen target(s).

Assimilate Flesh (Ex): A cadaver golem can choose to replace one of its limbs, sense organs, or other parts with a similar part taken from a living or recently deceased humanoid. Doing so grants the golem skills and abilities associated with that particular body part. The golem cannot, however, gain skill points in excess of its HD +3. Thus, if the golem acquires the hands of a rogue and wishes to assimilate some of the rogue's Open Lock skill ranks, the golem will have to lose some of its current skill ranks. The golem can never gain more ranks from a body part than that individual possessed; thus, if the rogue had 4 ranks in Open Lock, the golem can gain no more than 4 ranks from his hands, even if it's willing to lose more than 4 previously acquired skill points.

Additionally, the golem can acquire certain extraordinary and supernatural abilities, if it takes body parts from members of the proper classes or races. It can only have one such ability at a time and can choose when assimilating parts if it wishes to keep its current ability or gain the new one. The following table shows some possible skills and abilities the golem can acquire; the DM can add additional skills and abilities to the list as he sees fit.

Finally, a cadaver golem heals 2d8+5 points of damage anytime it acquires a new part. Adding a new body part is a full-round action.

Body Part	Possible New Skills	Possible New Abilities[1]
Eyes	Search, Spot	Darkvision (if better than golem's own)
Ears	Listen	Blindsense
Tongue	Diplomacy, Perform (sing), Speak Language	—
Hands	Climb, Open Lock, Sleight of Hand	Favored enemy, flurry of blows, smite, sneak attack
Brain[2]	Knowledge (any)	—
Heart	—	Rage
Legs	Hide, Jump, Move Silently	Evasion, fast movement

1 The part must come from a character or race that possesses this ability. A cadaver golem can have only one such ability at any time.
2 A cadaver golem's personality is mystically bound to its form. Switching brains does not alter the golem's identity.

Illus. by Daarken

Cadaver golem

Construct Traits: A cadaver golem has immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromancy effects, mind-affecting spells and abilities (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to extra damage from critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, or death from massive damage. It cannot heal damage (except as noted above), but it can be repaired. It has darkvision out to 60 feet and low-light vision.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A cadaver golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A *cure* or *heal* spell affects a cadaver golem as if a *slow* spell had been cast upon it, with a duration in rounds equal to twice the spell level. An *inflict* or *harm* spell dispels any such *slow* effect.

Regenerate deals damage equal to 4d8 plus caster level, as the golem's body battles against recently assimilated parts. It also prevents the golem from making use of any special abilities gained from acquiring parts for 2d4 rounds. The golem can attempt a Fortitude save to halve the damage and maintain its special ability.

CONSTRUCTION

The pieces of a cadaver golem must come from normal humanoid corpses that have not decayed significantly. Assembly requires a minimum of six different bodies—

one for each limb, the torso (including head), and the brain. In some cases, more bodies might be necessary. Special unguents and bindings worth 750 gp are also required. Creating a flesh golem requires casting a spell with the evil descriptor. This rite is used very infrequently, since few spellcasters care to create a homicidal, sentient golem they cannot control.

Assembling the body requires a DC 16 Craft (leatherworking) check or a DC 16 Heal check.

CL 12th; Craft Construct, *bull's strength, create undead, geas/quest, limited wish,* caster must be at least 12th level; Price 30,000 gp; Cost 15,750 gp + 1,170 XP.

GRAY JESTER

Medium Fey
Hit Dice: 8d6+16 (44 hp)
Initiative: +10
Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)
Armor Class: 18 (+6 Dex, +2 deflection), touch 18, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +4/+4
Attack: Scepter +10 melee (1d4 plus *Tasha's hideous laughter*) or scepter +10 melee touch (*Tasha's hideous laughter*)
Full Attack: Scepter +10 melee (1d4 plus *Tasha's hideous laughter*) or scepter +10 melee touch (*Tasha's hideous laughter*)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Empathic feeding, *Tasha's hideous laughter*
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 10/cold iron (but see text), low-light vision, spell resistance 18 (but see text)
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +12, Will +6
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 23, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 17
Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +10, Hide +12, Listen +3, Perform (comedy) +9, Move Silently +12, Sense Motive +7, Spot +3, Tumble +11, Use Magic Device +12
Feats: Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse
Environment: Any urban
Organization: Solitary or crew (1 gray jester and 2d4 bleak ones)
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: 9–12 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment: +2

A gaunt figure clad in gray-hued jester's motley comes capering around the corner. Its feet move silently on the stones, and it grips a scepter with a doll's head atop it in one hand.

The gray jester is an otherworldly fey drawn to the presence of humanoids. It feeds on laughter and joy, strengthening itself while permanently draining these emotions from its prey.

Gray jester

Gray jesters look like jesters, clowns, or mimes clad in gray, white, or black. They tend to be thin, even emaciated. Their eyes are cold and empty, their smiles wide and filled with broken but perfectly white teeth. All gray jesters carry scepters of some sort, much like those wielded by real court jesters.

Gray jesters average 6 feet in height and weigh roughly 110 pounds. They speak Common, Elven, and Sylvan.

COMBAT

Gray jesters dislike direct combat, preferring instead to approach unsuspecting people—children are favorites—and drain the joy and laughter from them. If a gray jester is forced to fight, it orders its bleak ones into combat and attempts to debilitate as many foes as possible with *Tasha's hideous laughter.* It then feeds, slaughters any helpless opponents, or flees, as the situation warrants.

Empathic Feeding (Su): A gray jester can drain joyous emotions from humanoid beings. The jester must be within 30 feet of a living humanoid who is experiencing laughter, joy, or similar emotions (this includes emotions evoked by magic, such as *Tasha's hideous laughter*). In a single round, a gray jester can feed on a number of people equal to its Charisma bonus (three targets for a typical gray jester). Any target who fails his DC 15 Will save takes 1d4 points of Charisma drain. Those drained to 0 Charisma in this fashion might become bleak ones (see below).

Gray jesters feed on emotions but are at their weakest just after feeding. For a number of rounds equal to the total points of Charisma drained, a gray jester's damage reduction falls to 5/cold iron and its spell resistance falls to 12.

Tasha's Hideous Laughter (Sp): At will, DC 15, caster level 5th. The gray jester must touch the subject, either by hand or with its scepter, to use this ability.

BLEAK ONES

The results of a gray jester's feeding vary depending on the target. Anyone with more Hit Dice than the gray jester loses the ability to laugh or feel joy if reduced to 0 Charisma. Those of fewer or equal Hit Dice, however, become what the gray jesters call "bleak ones." They lose all self-will as well as the capacity to feel positive emotions. Although not mindless, they undertake no actions unless the gray jester that drained them gives them orders. Bleak ones become followers and soldiers for the jester. They lose all abilities that rely on alignment, or those that require Charisma, but otherwise retain all their capabilities. A single gray jester can control up to 4 times its HD of bleak ones.

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PHANTASMAL SLAYER

Medium Outsider (Evil, Incorporeal, Native)
Hit Dice: 16d8+80 (152 hp)
Initiative: +9
Speed: Fly 60 ft. (perfect)
Armor Class: 27 (+5 Dex, +12 deflection), touch 27, flat-footed 22
Base Attack/Grapple: +16/—
Attack: Incorporeal touch +22 melee (2d6 and phantasmal facade)
Full Attack: 2 incorporeal touches +22 (2d6 and phantasmal facade)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Penetrating wound, phantasmal facade, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fear effects, incorporeal traits, outsider traits, spell resistance 22, telepathy 100 ft.
Saves: Fort +14, Ref +14, Will +14
Abilities: Str —, Dex 21, Con 20, Int 22, Wis 17, Cha 26
Skills: Bluff +29, Concentration +24, Decipher Script +25, Diplomacy +31, Intimidate +34, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (history) +25, Knowledge (religion) +25, Knowledge (the planes) +25, Listen +22, Search +25, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +27, Spot +22
Feats: Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Persuasive, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*feeblemind*), Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch)
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or flock (2–5)
Challenge Rating: 15
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 17–32 HD (Medium); 33–48 (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

From the darkness manifests the most hideous, most terrifying sight you have ever seen. It exudes evil and menace in palpable waves, and the air around it seems to grow cold.

Illus. by W. England

Phantasmal slayer

The horrors known as phantasmal slayers are literally fear incarnate. They exist only to terrify others—to death, if at all possible. They have no true form, but appear to all observers as their single greatest fear. Even those who disbelieve the phantasmal facade effect, or who view the slayer with *true seeing*, see a ghostly shadow of their greatest fear.

It is believed that the long-forgotten wizard who developed the *phantasmal killer* spell might have been inspired by these creatures.

Phantasmal slayers are roughly medium-sized, although they can appear much larger or smaller. Being incorporeal, they have no weight.

Phantasmal slayers speak Common, Abyssal, Draconic, Elven, Gnome, and Infernal. They also have the power of telepathy.

COMBAT

Phantasmal slayers exist to spread fear. They prefer to kill by means of their phantasmal facade and might be inclined to let a surviving enemy live if he seems likely to pass his tale of terror on to others. When a phantasmal slayer decides to kill, however, it is a focused, single-minded opponent. Slayers tend to concentrate on spellcasters and paladins above other foes.

Penetrating Wound (Ex): The incorporeal touch attack of a phantasmal slayer overcomes all forms of damage reduction, except those that require a specific material (adamantine, cold iron, alchemical silver).

Phantasmal Facade (Su): Anyone who so much as glances at a phantasmal slayer sees his greatest fear and is affected as if by the spell *phantasmal killer*. The target can make a DC 26 Will save to disbelieve, if his interaction with the slayer would suggest the object of his fear is unreal. Success renders the subject immune to that particular slayer's phantasmal facade for 24 hours, but the subject is still dazed for 1 round from shock. If the save fails, the target must make a DC 26 Fortitude save the first time the slayer touches him in combat. Failure causes the subject to die from fright. Even on a success, the target takes 3d6 points of damage. The save DCs is Charisma-based.

If the target survives this first touch, he can repeat the Will save to disbelieve on every further touch until he is dead or he disbelieves the facade. Until he succeeds, however, he must continue making Fortitude saves each time the slayer touches him.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*scare* (DC 20); 3/day—*crushing despair* (DC 22), *fear* (DC 22), *ray of exhaustion* (+21 ranged touch, DC 21); 1/day—*feeblemind* (DC 23), *waves of fatigue*. Caster level 16th. The spell DCs are Charisma-based.

Incorporeal Traits: A phantasmal slayer is harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, magic weapons, spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities. It has a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source, except for force effects or attacks made with *ghost touch* weapons. It can pass through solid objects, but not force effects, at will. Its attacks ignore natural armor, armor, and shields, but deflection bonuses and force effects work normally against them. An incorporeal creature always moves silently and cannot be heard with Listen checks if it doesn't wish to be.

Telepathy (Su): A phantasmal slayer can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has an Intelligence score.

TAINTED MINION

A tainted minion is a mortal who has been transformed into a horrific undead servant of evil.

SAMPLE TAINTED MINION

The warrior before you swings a spiked chain through the air in intricate patterns. In the shadows beneath his helm, specks of green light glow where his eyes should be.

This example uses a 5th-level human fighter as the base creature.

Tainted Minion, 5th-Level Human Fighter
Medium Undead (Augmented Humanoid)
Hit Dice: 5d12 (32 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 20 (+2 Dex, +4 natural, +4 masterwork chain shirt), touch 12, flat-footed 18
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+10
Attack: Claw +10 melee (1d4+5) or +1 *spiked chain* +12 melee (2d4+10) or masterwork shortbow +8 ranged (1d6/×3)
Full Attack: 2 claws +10/+10 melee (1d4+5) or +1 *spiked chain* +12 melee (2d4+10) or masterwork shortbow +8 ranged (1d6/×3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (spiked chain up to 10 ft.)
Special Attacks: Fear aura
Special Qualities: Change shape, damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 3, undead traits
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 15, Con —, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12
Skills: Climb +9, Listen +6, Spot +6
Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain)
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–5)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Always evil (any)
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: —

Tainted minion

Combat

This tainted minion's claw attacks are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

This tainted minion uses its Power Attack feat intelligently, calling it into play once it is certain that it has a good chance to hit its chosen target(s).

The Will save against this tainted minion's fear aura has a DC of 13. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Possessions: +1 spiked chain, masterwork chain shirt, *potion of haste.*

CREATING A TAINTED MINION

"Tainted minion" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature with at least mild levels of both corruption and depravity (referred to hereafter as the base creature). It is most often applied to a creature that dies because its corruption score exceeds the maximum for severe corruption for a creature with its Constitution score; see Table 4–1: Taint Thresholds and page 63.

A tainted minion uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead (augmented humanoid or monstrous humanoid). Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Armor Class: A tainted minion's natural armor bonus improves by +4, as chitinous plates form on and within the creature's flesh.

Attack: A tainted minion retains all the attacks of the base creature and also grows inch-long claws that it can use as a natural weapon. If the base creature can use weapons, the tainted minion retains this ability. A creature with natural weapons retains those natural weapons. A tainted minion fighting without weapons uses either its claw attack or its primary natural weapon (if it has one). A tainted minion armed with a weapon uses its claw or weapon, as it desires.

Full Attack: A tainted minion fighting without weapons can make two claw attacks as a full attack action, or it can

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use its other natural weapons (if it has any). If armed with a weapon, it usually uses the weapon as its primary attack, along with a claw or other natural weapon as a natural secondary attack.

Damage: Tainted minions have claw attacks. If the base creature does not have this attack form, use the appropriate damage value from the table below according to the tainted minion's size. Creatures that have other kinds of natural weapons retain their old damage values or use the appropriate value from the table below, whichever is higher.

Size	Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1
Tiny	1d2
Small	1d3
Medium	1d4
Large	1d6
Huge	1d8
Gargantuan	2d6
Colossal	2d8

A tainted minion's natural weapons are treated as magic weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Special Attacks: A tainted minion retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains an aura of fear.

Fear Aura (Su): Tainted minions are shrouded in a constant aura of terror and evil. Creatures within a 30-foot radius of a tainted minion must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 the tainted minion's level + its Cha modifier) or become shaken. Shaken creatures take a –2 morale penalty on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws.

Special Qualities: A tainted minion retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Change Shape (Su): A tainted minion can assume the form of any humanoid creature. See page 306 of the *Monster Manual* for details.

Damage Reduction (Ex): A tainted minion gains damage reduction according to its character level:

Character Level	Damage Reduction
1st–3rd	5/magic or silver
4th–7th	10/magic
8th–11th	10/good
12th+	15/magic and silver

Fast Healing (Ex): A tainted minion heals 3 hit points per round so long as it has least 1 hit point.

Undead Traits: A tainted minion is immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities, poison, magical sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to extra damage from critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be *raised,* and *resurrection* works only if it is willing. It has darkvision out to 60 feet.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex +2, Cha +4. As an undead creature, a tainted minion has no Constitution score.

Taint: A tainted minion no longer acquires taint. For purposes of special abilities, its corruption and depravity scores are both considered to be equal to half its Charisma score +1.

Environment: Any, usually same as base creature.

Organization: Solitary or gang (2–5).

Challenge Rating: As base creature +1.

Treasure: Double standard.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Advancement: By character class.

Level Adjustment: Tainted minions cannot be player characters.

TAINTED RAVER

A tainted raver is a character whose mind has been utterly shattered by the taint of depravity.

SAMPLE TAINTED RAVER

The warrior before you swings a spiked chain wildly through the air. Beneath his helm, you see eyes wide with madness. A sadistic grin contorts his features.

This example uses a 5th-level human fighter as the base creature.

Tainted Raver, 5th-Level Human Fighter
Medium Humanoid (Human)
Hit Dice: 5d10+15 (42 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
AC: 13 (+1 Dex, +4 masterwork chain shirt, –2 rage), touch 9, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+10
Attack: +1 *spiked chain* +12 melee (2d4+10) or masterwork shortbow +7 ranged (1d6/×3)
Full Attack: +1 *spiked chain* +12 melee (2d4+10) or masterwork shortbow +7 ranged (1d6/×3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (spiked chain up to 10 ft.)
Special Attacks: Perpetual rage
Special Qualities: Fast healing 3, madness
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +5
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 14
Skills: Climb +9, Listen +3, Spot +3
Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain)
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2–5)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Always evil (any)
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: Tainted ravers cannot be player characters.
Possessions: +1 *spiked chain,* masterwork chain shirt, masterwork shortbow with 10 arrows, *potion of haste.*

CREATING A TAINTED RAVER

"Tainted raver" is an acquired template that can be added to any humanoid or monstrous humanoid creature with at least mild

levels of both corruption and depravity (referred to hereafter as the base creature). It is most often applied to a creature that goes insane because its depravity score exceeds the maximum for severe depravity for a creature with its Wisdom score; see Table 4–1: Taint Thresholds on page 63.

A tainted raver uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Armor Class: A tainted raver's state of perpetual rage gives it a –2 penalty to Armor Class.

Special Attacks: A tainted raver retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains a perpetual rage ability.

Perpetual Rage (Ex): A tainted raver is constantly in a state of insane fury similar to a barbarian's rage. In this state, the raver gains a +4 bonus on its Strength and Constitution scores, a +2 bonus on Will saves, and a –2 penalty to Armor Class. An effect that counters rage, such as the *calm emotions* spell, temporarily suppresses this ability and negates these bonuses and penalties.

Unlike a barbarian's rage, a tainted raver's perpetual fury does not prevent it from taking actions that require reasoned thought or concentration. A tainted raver can cast spells, use skills, activate magic items, and even act calmly and rationally. It retains at least some modicum of tactical and rational thought, although its madness can cause it to act on those thoughts in an unpredictable manner. While some tainted ravers become screaming maniacs, others manifest their lunacy in more subtle and sinister ways. A rare few can suppress the outward signs of their innate wrath and even pass, for a time, as normal. Eventually, however, even the most iron-willed raver must give vent to its rage, resulting in fits of homicidal temper.

Special Qualities: A tainted minion retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Fast Healing (Ex): A tainted raver heals 3 points of damage each round.

Madness (Ex): A tainted raver is irretrievably mad. It uses its Charisma modifier on Will saves instead of its Wisdom modifier and has immunity to *confusion* and *insanity* effects. Anyone targeting a tainted raver with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability makes direct contact with its tortured mind and takes 1d3 points of taint (depravity) from that contact.

A tainted raver cannot be restored to sanity by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell. If restored to sanity, a tainted raver loses this template and all the modifiers it applies.

Saves: A tainted raver's state of perpetual rage gives it a +2 bonus on Will saves.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4 (for raging), Con +4 (for raging), Wis –6, Cha +6.

Taint: A tainted raver no longer acquires taint. For purposes of special abilities, its corruption and depravity scores are both considered to be half its Charisma score +1.

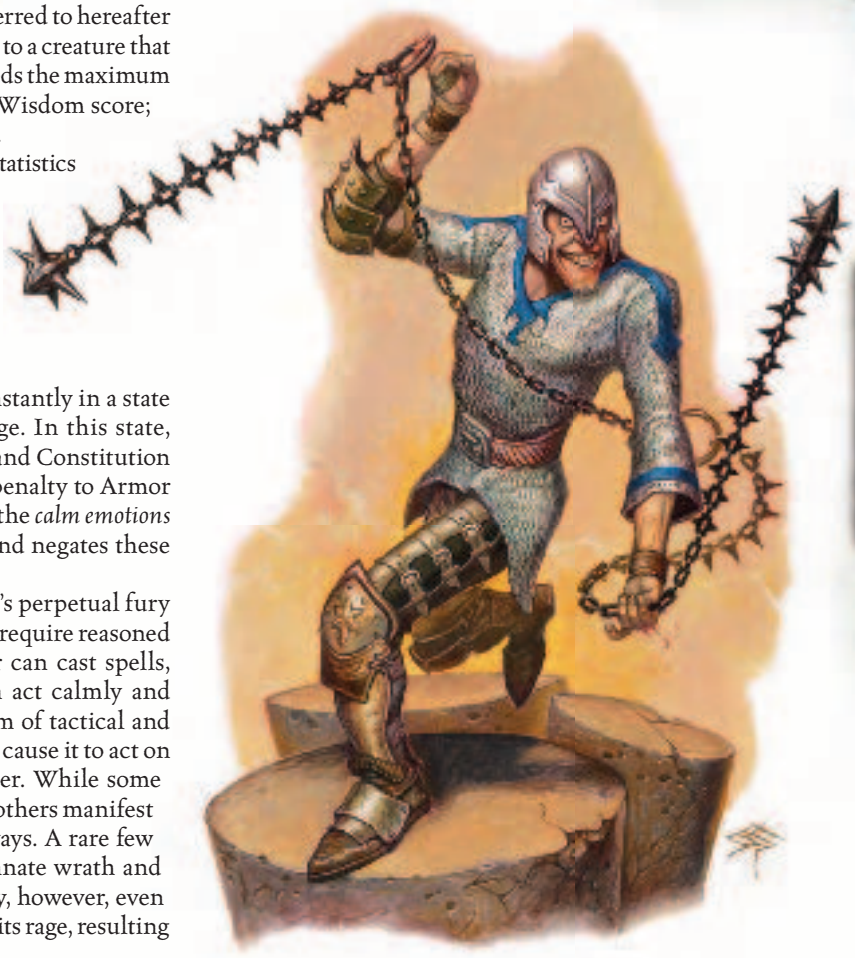
Environment: Any, usually same as base creature.

Organization: Solitary or gang (2–5).

Treasure: Double standard.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Level Adjustment: Tainted ravers cannot be player characters.



Tainted raver

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UNHOLY SCION

Not all births that follow from the mating of an evil outsider and a mortal result in a half-fiend. If the female partner in such a union is impregnated in an area of high taint, the result is the unholy scion. An unholy scion can also be created when a fiend mentally possess an unborn child within the womb. In either case, it is a creature with fiendish power and malignance, all the more terrifying for its ability to pass as mortal.

Even worse, the horror gestating in its mother's womb is already fully intelligent and possesses the ability to influence its mother's actions and observe the world through her senses. A mortal woman in such straits is often compelled to commit all manner of depraved acts, without ever fully understanding why she is forced to act in such ways—at least, not until the child is born.

Unholy scions look like normal members of their mortal parent's race, but they are subtly disturbing. Their features might be ever so slightly off, their eyes possessed of an evil gleam, or they might simply make everyone around them nervous for no obvious cause. The overwhelming majority of unholy scions are humanoid, although animal scions are not unheard of.

All unholy scions are irredeemably evil. By the time the child is born, it is no longer possible to separate the possessing

fiend from the newly developed mind and soul; they are one, forever intertwined. The fiend can never return to its original form, and slaying one requires slaying the other. The precise personality of the child depends on the nature of the fiend parent or possessor. Unholy scions formed from devils are deceptive and scheming, while those possessed by demons are likely to be more wantonly destructive. Unholy scions formed from taint rather than possession tend toward chaotic.

SAMPLE UNHOLY SCION

The individual seems to be an ordinary lizardfolk to all outward appearance, but its gaze is abnormally cold, even for a reptile.

This example uses a standard lizardfolk as the base creature.

Unholy Scion Lizardfolk
Medium Outsider (augmented humanoid, evil, native, reptilian)
Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class: 18 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +2 deflection) or 20 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, +2 heavy shield, +2 deflection), touch 13, flat-footed 17 or 19
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2
Attack: Claw +2 melee (1d4+1 plus 2d6 against good) or club +2 melee (1d6+1 plus 2d6 against good) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1)
Full Attack: 2 claws +2 melee (1d4+1 plus 2d6 against good) and bite +0 melee (1d4 plus 2d6 against good), or club +2 melee (1d6+1 plus 2d6 against good) and bite +0 melee (1d4 plus 2d6 against good), or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1)
Special Attacks: Familial charm, spell-like ability (*charm person*), unholy strike
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/good or magic, darkvision 60 ft., hold breath, fast healing 4, immunity to poison and mind-affecting spells and abilities, instant knowledge, resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5, spell resistance 12
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14
Skills: Balance +7, Intimidate +4, Jump +7, Sense Motive +4, Swim +5
Feats: Multiattack
Environment: Temperate marshes
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: 50% coins; 50% goods; 50% items
Alignment: Neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +6

Unholy scion

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Unholy scions among more primitive cultures, such as lizardfolk, are usually shunned or banished. All too often they return when they have gained sufficient power to enslave or torment their brethren. They frequently become religious or cult leaders.

Combat

Unholy scions prefer sly and insinuating tactics, such as sending charmed minions against their foes or attempting to charm their foes into becoming minions. If combat is unavoidable, they make full use of their unholy strike and spell-like abilities. They are intelligent fighters, who attempt to eliminate the most dangerous opponents first.

Charm Person (Sp): 3/day, Will DC 13 negates, caster level 2nd. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Familial Charm (Su): This lizardfolk's mother accompanies it, wrapped in a constant miasma of despair. She has the abilities of a standard lizardfolk (*Monster Manual*, page 169).

Hold Breath: This unholy scion lizardfolk can hold its breath for 52 rounds before it risks drowning.

Skills: Because of its tail, this unholy scion lizardfolk has a +4 racial bonus on Jump, Swim, and Balance checks. The skill modifiers given in the statistics block include a –2 armor check penalty (–4 on Swim checks) for carrying a heavy shield.

CREATING AN UNHOLY SCION

"Unholy scion" is an inherited template that can be added to any living humanoid or animal (referred to hereafter as the base creature). Animal scions are exceptionally rare; the overwhelming majority of unholy scions are humanoids.

An unholy scion uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to outsider (evil, native). Do not recalculate Hit Dice, base attack bonus, or saving throws. Size is unchanged.

Armor Class: The unholy power of a scion grants it a deflection bonus to AC equal to its Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

Attack: An unholy scion gains a claw attack if it did not already possess one. (The creature's nails or claws do not appear to be any stronger or sharper than normal for its race.) If the base creature can use weapons, the scion retains this ability. A scion fighting without weapons uses its claws when making an attack action. When it has a weapon, it usually uses the weapon instead.

Full Attack: An unholy scion fighting without weapons uses its claws when making a full attack. If armed with a weapon, it uses the weapon as its primary attack and its claws as a natural secondary attack.

Damage: Unholy scions have claw attacks. Use the damage values in the table below, or the base creature's damage values (if any), whichever is greater.

Size	Claw Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1
Tiny	1d2
Small	1d3
Medium	1d4
Large	1d6
Huge	1d8
Gargantuan	2d6
Colossal	3d6

Special Attacks: An unholy scion retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains the following special attacks.

Familial Charm (*Su*): An unholy scion's mother is under a constant *charm person* or *charm animal* effect (as appropriate), generated by the scion. The mother might be aware that her actions are inappropriate, even that her child is evil, but she cannot shake her emotional devotion to it. The scion can switch between its own senses and its mother's at will as a free action. The scion can use any of its spell-like abilities with its mother, rather than itself, as the source, much as wizards can deliver touch attacks through their familiars.

Familial charm does not allow a save, and applies even before the scion's actual birth (since the unborn scion is already intelligent and knowledgeable enough to have its own agenda).

Spell-Like Abilities (*Sp*): An unholy scion with an Intelligence or Wisdom score of 8 or higher has spell-like abilities depending on its Hit Dice, as indicated on the table below. These abilities are cumulative. Unless otherwise noted, an ability is usable once per day. Caster level equals the creature's HD, and the save DC is Charisma-based.

Unholy Strike (*Su*): An unholy scion's natural weapons and any melee weapon it wields are treated as evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. In addition, all such attacks deal an extra 2d6 points of damage against good-aligned opponents.

Special Qualities: An unholy scion has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities.

Damage reduction 5/good or magic (if HD 11 or less) or 10/good or magic (if HD 12 or more).

Darkvision out to 60 feet.

Fast healing 4.

HD	Abilities
1–2	*Charm* animal or charm *person* 3/day[1]
3–4	*Desecrate*
5–6	*Enervation*, *protection from good* 3/day
7–8	*Major image* 3/day, *poison* 3/day
9–10	*Dominate animal* or *dominate person*[1], *baleful polymorph*
11–12	*Animate dead*[2], *true seeing* 3/day
13–14	*Unholy aura* 3/day, *unhallow*
15–16	*Harm*
17–18	*Gate*[3]
19–20	*Polymorph any object*

1 An unholy scion gains *charm animal* and *dominate animal* if the base creature is an animal, or *charm person* and *dominate person* if the base creature is humanoid.
2 An unholy scion can control up to four times its HD in skeletons and zombies with this ability, in addition to any similar ability the scion might gain from class features.
3 This ability can only open a *gate* to the home plane of the parent or possessing fiend who created the scion. If the scion was created by taint rather than by fiendish possession, the gate opens to the Abyss.

Immunity to poison and mind-affecting spells and abilities.

Instant Knowledge: The moment a fetus is corrupted or possessed, it gains a working knowledge of the world and has full access to its mental abilities, skills, and spell-like abilities.

Resistance to acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, and fire 5.

Spell resistance equal to creature's HD + 10 (maximum 35).

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Dex +2, Int +6, Wis +2, Cha +4. (Note: Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma modifiers apply even before birth.)

Skills: An unholy scion gains skill points as an outsider and has skill points equal to (8 + Int modifier) × (HD + 3). Do not include Hit Dice from class levels in this calculation—a scion gains outsider skill points only for its racial Hit Dice, and gains the normal amount of skill points for its class levels. Treat skills from the base creature's list as class skills and other skills as cross-class.

Organization: Unholy scions are usually solitary creatures (not counting any minions they might gain), regardless of the proclivities of the base creature.

Challenge Rating: HD 4 or less, as base creature +1; HD 5 to 10, as base creature +2; HD 11 or more, as base creature +3.

Alignment: Always evil (any).

Level Adjustment: +5.

Treasure: As base creature.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JAMES WYATT won an Origins award for *City of the Spider Queen*. He also wrote *Oriental Adventures* and has co-authored numerous other roleplaying game products, including the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, *Sharn: City of Towers*, *Draconomicon: The Book of Dragons*, and *Book of Exalted Deeds*. He lives in Washington State with his wife, Amy, and their son, Carter.

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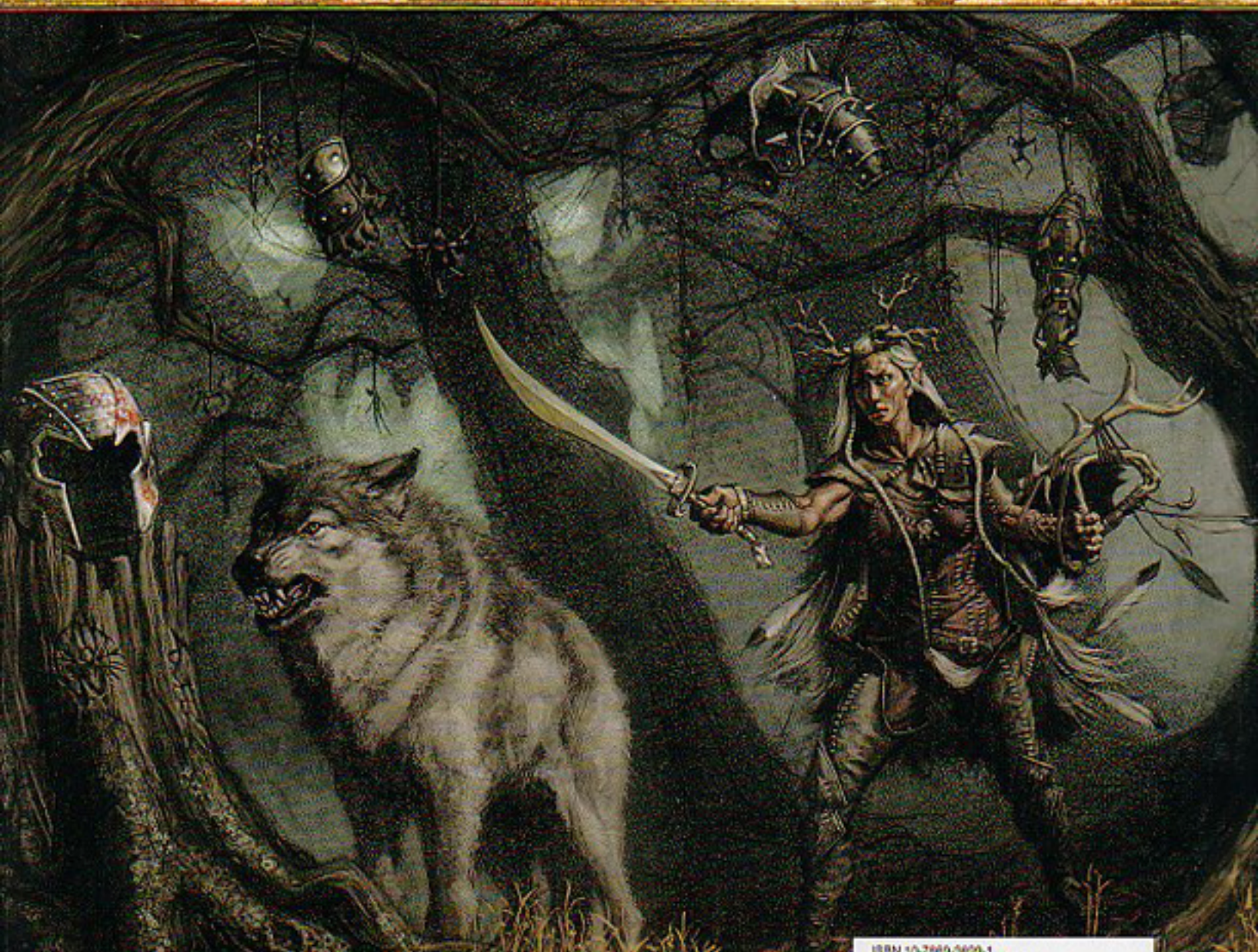

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